

LONDON THE READER

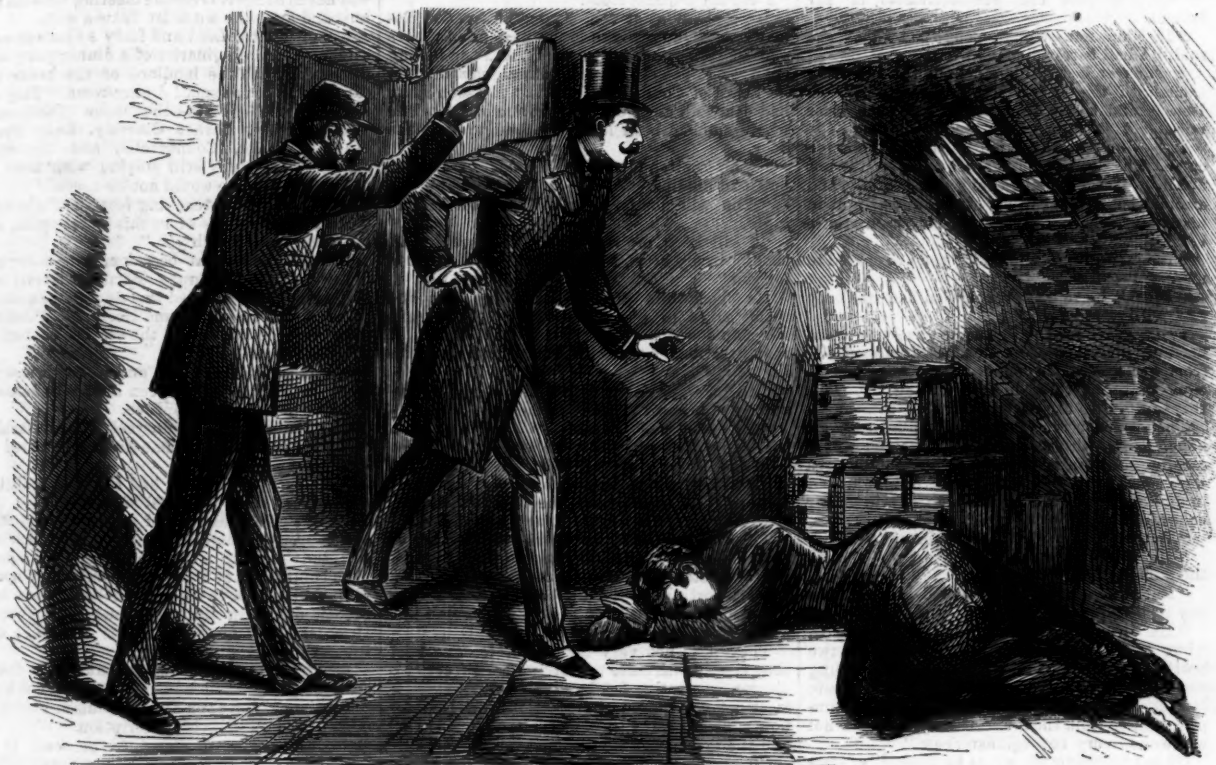
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[JUST IN TIME.]

MY LADY'S LOVERS.

BY
AN EMINENT AUTHOR.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

A RE-UNION.

And life renews
Its floweret hues
With sweet love's own refreshing dews.
Oceans wide
With a tide
Of new-found joy returning glide.

THE rooms Lord Ardinaun had taken in town were not adapted to receive much company. As it was not the season he did not expect any, and as a matter of fact he was not troubled with ordinary callers.

But suddenly there was a rush upon him. The first to come was Tommy Dray, who brought the ill-tidings from Dumbiedikes, which a few hours later were refuted by the Duke of Blackfern, who came with the joyous news of Lady Pearl's escape in company with Lady Friarly.

The Scotch peer and his wife had strict notions, and Pearl's free intercourse with her lover was a thing they would scarce have forgiven under ordinary circumstances, but this was no time to cavil, and they said they would receive her gladly if she would come.

"She will not leave Egerton's side," the duke said, "until he is out of danger or has given up his life."

"This is a strange story," said Lady Ardinaun. "I cannot quite understand a woman like Pearl loving a man who makes companions of vagabonds."

"Perhaps I had better tell you his true story," the duke suggested. "Can you give me a quarter of an hour?"

"You know it is true?"

"Yes."

"Then I will. I will listen to it—for if there is a touch of romance in a true story I can take pleasure in it. We Scotch are very matter-of-fact people."

"You pretend to be," said the duke, smiling. "but the dear old country is rife with legendary lore and there's ne'er a family of mark without its honest ghost. The shell is hard I grant, but the kernel is good."

Lady Ardinaun found the story interesting, and hard as she professed to be her honest heart warmed towards Hugh and she astonished her husband by telling him that she was half in love with him herself.

"Few men have such a noble spirit," she said.

"Few have the opportunity of exercising it you mean," his lordship said.

"It may be so," she answered. "I never thought of that. Well, if he recovers they will marry I suppose—and you will give your sanction?"

"Unless you wish me to withhold it."

Lady Ardinaun laughed and turned away. For once in her life she had the spirit of the match-maker within her, and if Hugh lived she determined he was to be the husband of Pearl.

She ordered her carriage and drove over to the house where Hugh was lying and sent in her

name to Pearl. The two women had a few moments together and the elder cried over the younger, who had passed through perils of no common order.

"We were very angry with you, Pearl," she said, "and spake some hard things, but you will forgive us."

"With all my heart, if I have anything to forgive," Pearl replied.

"And how is he?" asked Lady Ardinaun, with a motion of her hand towards the room where Hugh was lying.

"I have hope," replied Pearl, "but he stands on the border land between this world and the next."

"Hope on, and trust in God," said Lady Ardinaun, and having exchanged a warm embrace they parted.

In the evening there came a report that Hugh had shown some slight symptoms of improvement, and hopes grew stronger. Meanwhile Lady Friarly had been induced to take up her abode with the Ardinauns, pending the outcome of her restoration to the world.

That sorrow was to be her companion during her sojourn in the world was plain. Carking care and lost hope had both set their seal upon her, but since she left Gaunt House she had become a softened woman.

Her desire for revenge was gone, but she had no wish to see again the man who had so bitterly wronged her.

"If it can be done," she said to the duke, "let him go free. Leave him to his conscience."

"It is too late, I fear," the duke replied.

"Sabotson has confessed too much."

And so it was. Sir Charles was in the hands

of the police awaiting an examination before the magistrates on a charge of conspiracy, and Sabotson, who had hoped for a permission to give evidence, was to be charged with him.

Skilful detectives had been gathering the threads together, and there was a case which had practically no defence against them.

Two days passed and Hugh Egerton did not die, but his life still hung in the balance. Pearl seldom left his side, and only took snatches of sleep, despite the remonstrances of her friends.

"If I am not strong enough for this," she said, "I had better die!"

So she watched by his side, and the two often exchanged the sweet, soft utterances of love. Doubly and trebly dear they were to each other now.

It was on the third morn that the change came. The doctor said it must come soon or not at all. Hugh had slept long and soundly, and awoke with a colour in his cheeks and a light in his eyes which Pearl had not seen there before.

"Hugh, darling," she said, "you are spared to me."

"I feel," he replied, "as if God had suddenly restored my strength."

Then Pearl for the first time gave way and a flood of tears that could not be restrained fell from her eyes. In silence they remained in close embrace, their hearts pouring out their thankfulness to the Giver of all good things.

Then the doctor came in and confirmed their hope. Hugh, with moderate patience and kindly care, would soon be out of danger. Messages were sent to the duke and Lord Ardinlaun, and in an hour both were by his side offering their congratulations.

"But where is my brother Nesbitt?" he said.

"He was with me a few days ago," replied the duke, evasively.

"But now—where is he?" asked Hugh. "Has any ill befallen him?"

"He is safe, I believe," the duke replied, "but his gipsy wife is missing and her two brothers are in custody. Every means is being strained to find Mrs. Egerton. Nesbitt trusts to himself and to the police. I do not expect impossibilities from them and if they fail shall not make one to cry out against them."

On his return to his rooms in Piccadilly, after succeeding in assuring Hugh that Nesbitt at least was alive, he found a message from Scotland Yard awaiting him. It was to the effect that Lanah the gipsy desired to see him at the House of Detention, whither, after a cursory examination before the magistrate, he had been remanded.

The duke accordingly jumped into a cab and armed with the letter went off to the prison house in Clerkenwell.

There he found Lanah, abject and broken as a beaten cur.

"You sent for me," said the duke.

"Yes," replied Lanah, "but I must be quite alone with you."

He glanced at the official in attendance, and in obedience to a sign from the duke the man withdrew to the far end of the room.

"Now," said the duke, "what is it you have to tell me?"

"I must have a promise first," said Lanah—"a promise that I shall be set free."

"I cannot give it to you," the duke replied, "for I have not the power to see it kept. You can make your confession, and if it is worth anything it will be considered in mitigation of your punishment."

"It is about my sister I would speak," said Lanah, biting his nails feverishly. "She's missing, you know."

"Who told you so?" said the duke, quickly.

"Then how do you know it?"

"I—I saw her after she left the house—only for a minute though, and I THINK I know where she is."

"Alive or dead?" said the duke.

"I can't say," groaned Lanah. "Oh! promise me that I shall not be kept here all my life and I will tell all. You can't think what

I suffer. Only when I sleep do I go back to the woods and green lanes, and that only makes the waking more terrible. When I open my eyes and see the coffin in which I am closed I feel like one lying in a living grave."

The two last words recalled Countycella to his mind, and repentant though he was he yet strove to make a bargain before he laid his secret bare.

"I will do what I can for you," the duke said, "I cannot promise more."

He could not but feel contempt for the Roman rascal, so ready to inflict pain upon others and bearing it himself so badly, and the feeling changed to one of horror and indignation when he heard of Countycella's fate. As soon as he had heard all and got a description of the place where she had been left he moved towards the door.

Lanah knelt, and seizing the skirt of his coat put it to his lips.

"You will not forget me?" he said, imploringly.

"I will keep my word," the duke said, "although in my heart I think hanging is too good for you."

He shook him off, and hurrying from the room asked to see the governor of the jail. His name was a password to the sanctum of that functionary, and the warder ushered him in.

The governor listened to what he had to say and gave prompt advice and help.

"Lose no time," he said. "Two of my men shall go with you. On your way gather what policemen you can and a doctor also. Take restoratives and have a cab handy. I would come myself, but I have the calls to visit, and that duty I cannot depute to another to-day."

The two men were summoned—young, active fellows—who obtained axes, a rope or two, and a canvas stretcher that folded into a small compass, and set forth with the duke. On their way to the ruined houses they pressed a policeman and a doctor into their service.

They had not very far to go, for the spot they sought was close to Farringdon Street. No clearer description can be given of it now, for it is swept away, and the Metropolitan Railway now runs over the site where the house stood and the face of the whole district is changed.

On arriving at the door, followed by a few stragglers, whose keen instincts led them to see there was something unusual in the appearance of the party, the door was broken in without the least ceremony. The policeman was left on guard and the others hastened below.

They had brought no lantern with them, but one of the men had a box of matches, and he lighted them one by one while his comrade plied the axe to break down the wooden bar. It was nailed securely, but he broke it down, and then they opened the door and the duke without hesitation plunged in.

Just in time, for Countycella, after three days of unutterable misery, had succumbed to a weariness that was the high road to death, and lay stretched out on the floor.

She could not speak, but as they brought her out and pressed some wine between her lips she thanked them with her eyes and sank into oblivion.

"Don't fear," said the doctor, feeling her pulse, "she has had no food or drink for three days and is exhausted. A warm bath and a little proper care will soon restore her."

"Her arm is bleeding," said the duke.

"So it is," said the doctor, bending over her. "It looks like a puncture. We have injured her."

"No, your grace; this is a rat bite—the first she has received. In half an hour we should have been too late."

The duke shuddered and took a little wine himself, but the others were too familiar with the darker side of life to be much affected, and a cab being ready Countycella was put into it and driven to a house the doctor named, where a charitable sisterhood nursed the sick.

"It is nearest and best," he said, "and they will do their work without delay. After it is done a donation would be welcome. Not that

they would ask for it or seek it on their own account. It will all be spent on others."

"They shall have a handsome one," the duke said.

And later he had set in operation the detective department to find Nesbitt, and ere the night had come he had been found and brought to Countycella's side.

She had suffered much and must remain in the house of the sisterhood for a few days, but was not in danger. Over the meeting between the husband and wife we must draw a veil.

A month later Lord and Lady Ardinlaun were settling the preliminaries of a dinner party and discussing with the landlord of the house the capabilities of the small dining-room. They expected some guests—the three Dashwoods, Tommy Dray, Barnet Claverly, Lady Pearl, Hugh, Nesbitt, Countycella, and the duke. Lady Friarly was still staying with them in the house, but she would not be there.

"In nothing approaching festivity," she said, "can I ever partake of in this world again, but my heart will be with you."

It was to be a great occasion, a re-union and in a way a making up. Barnet Claverly and Meg were to be married two days later and sail immediately for India, and Nesbitt and Countycella were bound across the sea for the land of the West.

It was their own choice, and when their arguments in favour of it had been heard the listeners could do nothing but approve.

"The life will suit Countycella," said Nesbitt, "and for myself it is time that I laboured as becomes a man."

And Barnet Claverly had thrown off all the guardman and assumed something of the stern airs of a manager of an estate, and Meg had bought a book on housekeeping which she was studying with might and main. The figures were confused, but she had no doubt they would sort themselves in her mind by-and-by and become useful in the end. Lucy and Tommy Dray were to be married at the same time and spend their honeymoon in Italy.

By dint of a little management it was found that the party could be got in without much inconvenience, and then Lord Ardinlaun ordered a dinner of a most lavish description. When his generous instinct was aroused he could be as liberal as the most reckless spendthrift going. Lady Ardinlaun seconded him admirably.

On that dinner it is not necessary here to dwell. It was a success, and that is all that need be said, for youth and love and hope and joy sat at the board. The clouds were gone, the sun was shining again, and no living creature who had a right to be there was missing.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

FINIS.

As a wanderer

Through dark and desert ways and peril gone
All night, at last by break of cheerful dawn
We stand on the brow of some climbing hill
And see the land of peace.

In a prison cell sat Sir Charles Friarly. It was the eve of his trial and on the morrow he would have to stand before his earthly judge and receive the reward of his crimes. He knew that was inevitable. From the hand of justice there was no escape.

He knew also that his case had excited a vast amount of interest and that every available seat in the court had been disposed of to applicants of position—men and women whom he had known in happier times. Some of them had, indeed, been what the world calls friends, and they were coming to see how he bore himself during his trial.

Talleyrand once said that it was impossible to avoid feeling a little pleasure when we hear of the misfortunes of others, even if they be close friends, and as a man of the world, speaking of people of this world, he was justified in what he said. Not one of the crowd who were craving to see him in the felon's dock on the morrow had any real sorrow in their hearts. They were

shocked and horrified of course, but they looked forward to the coming trial with a feeling akin to pleasure, and Sir Charles Friarly knew it.

"I am to be exhibited like a wild beast," he muttered, "of a rare species. A baronet a felon is a novelty, and they will not lose the chance of seeing me if they can help it."

He was very bitter against them, as he was against all the world. Like other men who have played the wrong game and lost, he was disposed to be hard on those who had defeated him, and had little blame to bestow upon himself. Above all, he was very bitter against his innocent wife.

"They tell me," he muttered, "that she has refused to appear as a witness against me, but I know the value of that. She was not wanted or she would have been there readily enough—confound her. Perhaps she will make one of those who come to see the show."

The door of his cell now swung open and the heavy footstep of the jailer was heard. Sir Charles sat by the small table with his back to him and did not move until the man spoke. Even in prison a title has weight, and the jailer was respectful.

"A visitor, Sir Charles," he said.

"Show him in," he said, in much the same tone he might have employed to his servant at home.

"It's a lady, sir."

"It is I, Charles," said Lady Friarly, advancing. "I have asked for and received an order from the Home Secretary to see you in private."

The jailer went out and closed the door, leaving them together in the narrow cell. Sir Charles rose and turned a disdainful look upon his wife.

"You might have spared me this," he said. "Had you not sufficient pleasure in fancying my degradation?"

"Do you think that any suffering of yours would bring me joy?" she asked.

"I can only reason by analogy," he said, grimly. "If you were in my place and I in yours I should be very happy."

"I cannot believe you."

"If it pleases you to answer otherwise, do so. Now take a good long stare at me—mark how I am broken down; absorb the details of this cell and go. You will be able to entertain your friends at dinner with a description of my present abode."

He spoke deliberately, with cutting sarcasm, as he thought, but his wife did not move. She had come in true affection to soothe him, to offer such consolation as she could, and to extend to him forgiveness if he asked for it.

"Charles," she said, with bright pearly tears trembling in her eyes, "will you not even try to understand me? Have you utterly forgotten the love I bore you?"

"A love that made my life a burden to me," he said, bitterly.

"Because you did not love me, Charles—because you were not true to me."

"Well, well," he said, impatiently, "what matters whether your love was true or mine false?—the end has come."

"No, not the end," she said, laying a hand tenderly upon his arm, "if you will forget the past as I will try to do, we may yet know some years of peace together."

"Good heavens, woman!" he cried, "don't be a hypocrite. You know that we are parted for ever."

"No, Charles. Men that ought to know tell me that after all you will not get a very long term of imprisonment—two or three years at the most—and if you can endure it patiently—"

"Mildred," he said, with a sudden sympathy in his tone and manner, "you cannot mean what you say. You do not offer to live with me again?"

"If you will try to love me, Charles."

He turned away from her and stood for a minute with his hands clasped before him and his whole body trembling. When he turned to her again he was quite calm.

"Mildred," he said, "it would have been

kinder if you had come hither to revile me, for I could have borne it better than your forgiveness."

"You think so," she said, "but in time to come, when you will really understand what my love is—"

"Mildred," he hastily said, "do not speak of it to-night. It is enough for me to know that I am forgiven by you."

"And you will bear your lot in patience?"

"What I have settled to do I will do," he said.

It was a vague answer and she was obliged to be satisfied with it, for he would give her no other.

"You know how resolute I am," he said. "Leave the future to me. What do you intend doing?"

"It is arranged for me to sail for Italy to-morrow morning. I shall stay at Naples until the summer. Lord and Lady Ardinlaun go with me."

"You will be better away," he said. "Mildred, give me both your hands."

She gave them to him.

"Now look me in the face."

She lifted her tearful eyes to his, and the unutterable softness of her gaze touched him to the depths of his soul. But outwardly he was very firm.

"Say again that you forgive me."

"I forgive you, Charles."

"With all your heart and soul?"

"With all my heart and soul."

"God bless you, Mildred, dear," he said, and stooping down put his lips to hers.

"Now go," he said, with a strong effort, "a little more will unnerve me."

"You will bear your punishment, Charles, with meekness?" she implored.

"That which I have resolved to do I will do," he said again, and kissing her upon the brow he pushed her gently towards the door and summoned the warder with a knock.

The door was thrown open and Lady Friarly dropped her veil.

"Remember, Charles," she whispered.

"I will forget nothing," he said, "while I live."

And then she passed out and saw him no more.

After she was gone he sat down and stared at the small jet of gas fixed in the wall for some ten minutes—then rose and took off his coat.

"Bear it patiently," he murmured. "Well! I could do that. But risk being a villain to her again—never."

"I might become a better man," he mused, as he began to search the lining within the right-hand sleeve, "but I do not think it possible. I came of a bad stock. It used to be said that there never was a good Friarly, and I am the last of the line. It is well that the world should be rid of us."

He had found what he sought, and tearing out the lining brought a small packet to light. This he opened carefully and laid upon the table. It contained a small quantity of white powder.

That which he had made up his mind to do he would do.

The horrible, sinful resource of the suicide was his—a life of sin and selfishness had brought him to the state that shut out all other hope. The great high road that leads to forgiveness, the Christian's path, he could not or would not accept.

All his life he had mocked at religion, and gone hand in hand with the atheist, and it had brought him to this.

He did not feel very much just then, for the numbness of despair had laid hold of his soul, and he mistook the feeling for resignation.

Calmly he stretched himself out upon the floor and put the white powder on his tongue, then closed his eyes upon the world for evermore.

An hour afterwards the warder came in to see why he had not obeyed the regular gong and gone to rest, and found that the spirit of the unhappy man had fled.

Doctor Sabotson stood his trial alone, and the evidence being clear he was proved guilty. Had he not made some form of confession he would have received a very heavy penalty, but the judge, in consideration of the revelations he had made, only sentenced him to imprisonment for two years.

Later in the day Harnac was tried for the attempt to murder Hugh Egerton, and was sentenced to imprisonment for life. When he heard his doom he stood like one turned to stone, and, after vainly endeavouring to rouse him, they carried him down to the cells, where he presently burst out groaning and crying for mercy, and so passed the night.

Lanah was sentenced to imprisonment for five years for his share in the conspiracy. County-cells had left the country and made no charge against him.

Hugh and Pearl were married, and Hugh entered upon his career as a barrister. The strange story of his life first helped him into notice, and his activity made him a reputation with a rapidity that excited the envy and admiration of his less fortunate brothers.

Ere they had been married three years two children were born to them, Hugh was making a good income, and they had a pleasant house at Sunbury.

The duke often came down to see them, but most of his time was spent in looking after his estates, which had suffered a little by his extravagance during his minority. But Denvilles was not lost to him, nor likely to be, and when he came of age there was only one encumbrance of very much importance upon the estates. This was paid off during the first year of his actual possession.

"And now," said prudent Lord Ardinlaun, "you must look about for a wife."

"Plenty of time yet," said the duke, laughing.

"No, no," insisted the canny Scotchman; "a man is a poor creature alone, and he wants a helpmate. But choose wisely. Get a woman who is moderately fond of society, but whose first thought is of home."

So the duke looked about him, and he found what he wanted in the daughter of Lord Gainsberry, a nobleman of some mark in the political world, and the marriage being brought about the duke entered into politics, which with the cares of wealth and domestic duties kept him well occupied and saved him from the snares that beset impulsive men when they give up their lives to idleness.

One day it suddenly occurred to him that for years he had not seen nor heard anything of his old college chum, Lord Raidenstore, who at the time of the great excitement at Dumbdikes had disappeared from society and nothing more had been heard of him.

It was supposed that he had gone abroad, mainly on account of his disappointment in connection with Lady Pearl, but nothing was known for certain, and after some vague speculation the problem was given up and he shared the fate of many and was for the most part forgotten.

Dwelling upon his disappearance the Duke of Blackfern arrived at the conclusion that there was something mysterious in it, and having put agents to work he traced him to the inn where he had encountered Emilie de Launay. What he heard of his story there prompted the duke to go down there and make inquiries in person.

The same landlady was there and she was very garrulous about the gentleman who had encountered a "long-lost love," as she termed Emilie, beneath her roof.

"It was quite romantic," she said, "and the lady happened upon an accident playing with one of them foreign daggers my husband brought home from India, and she was nigh a dying. But she pulled through, and as soon as she could get about they was married quite privately at a church not far from here. I heard say that he was lord somebody, but the election came on at the time and I hadn't a minute to spare. So I didn't trouble any more about it. As for them

daggers I've had them took away, for if one accident happens so may another."

"Just so," said the duke; "and what became of them? Where did they go to?"

"Abroad somewhere—France or Italy, or some of them places. The gentleman told the clerk of the church, who was the only witness to the marriage, that he meant to leave England for many years and perhaps for ever."

"You don't remember the name of the lady, I suppose?"

"He used to call her Sunny when he was sitting by her side when she was ill."

"Ah!" said the duke. "I remember her. I am glad he made her his wife."

And the duke went away satisfied. A little later on he had a letter from Lord Raidenstore saying that he had settled in Switzerland and was very happy and did not intend to return to England until his son was old enough to go to school.

Lady Friarly did not hear of her husband's death until months after, and the whole truth was never told to her. She supposed he died in prison, and mourned for him with that belief, and intends to pass the remainder of her days in Italy.

Colonel Dashwood has sold Dumbdikes and lives in London, spending most of his time at the club, or at the residence of his daughter, Mrs. Dray, who is one of the happiest of women.

Barnet Claverly and his wife are getting on, as Meg writes, "like a house on fire," and are amassing wealth in a way that is "appalling." They hope to return to England in a few more years.

And lastly, far away in the almost untrodden lands of the distant West, Nesbitt Egerton and his gipsy wife live happily in a homestead of their own. Around them are pasture land and wide stretches of golden corn; by their fireside are their little ones. They hear occasionally from old friends at home and they ask no more.

The weaver's task is done, the threads that blew idly about hither and thither for awhile have been gathered together and woven into a shapely form. The shuttle falls from his hand and at this task he labours no more.

[THE END.]

SWEDEN.

THE remembrance which the traveller has of Sweden is to a considerable extent of a morose character. As I sit by the fire and recall the days I wandered through that northern land, there rise before me in a vague way apparently endless miles of white rocky ground and forests of dark pine trees, varied only by great sheets of water—a fourth part of Sweden, be it observed, is under water. It is the most sombre portion of Scandinavia, wanting the grand mountain ranges of Norway and the open green fields of Denmark. But there are two things which stand out in recollection as bright and cheerful. The happy, lively peasantry, and beautiful Stockholm. The people are vivacious and pleasure-loving like the French. If they wore blue blouses and cut their hair short as a scrubbing-brush, and drank red wine, they might pass for children of fair Provence. As it is, their locks are long, their dress rough homespun, and their drink is of the strongest. But they are a joyous, kindly, courteous folk, fond of social gatherings, a dance round a May-pole, a marriage, or a market. They are hospitable to the stranger withal, and when he crosses the threshold of a farm or cottage he is a stranger no longer; a people full of hilarity and good humour whom it is pleasant to remember.

But it is worth while going all the way to that far-off corner of Europe just to see Stockholm, as one looks at it for the first time from the Baltic; worth all the tossing on the terrible North Sea, and the days spent upon shipboard in poky cabins, or on land in musty, fusty hotels. When the little asthmatic steamer that has carried you from Gottenborg through long

canals and across broad lakes, and by narrow tortuous channels among wooded islands, turns a point, Stockholm comes suddenly into view—a bright, chaste, beautiful city, "kissed," to quote a rapturous guide-book, "on the one cheek by the ripples of a lake, on the other saluted by the billows of the sea," the lake being the Malar Lake, and the sea the Baltic. Indeed, I don't know that any capital of Europe is more picturesque than that of Sweden; not "the grey metropolis of the North," nor Constantinople on the Golden Horn, nor Berne with her Girdle of snow-clad mountains. Stockholm rises from the water embosomed in woods of pine and ash and birch, with a background of grey hills. She sits on her seven islands like a queen.

BRITTLE MORALS.

THERE is a condition of the moral nature which may be appropriately described by the adjective brittle. It is hard and impervious, and highly polished. It retains its form without the slightest suggestion of laxity or deviation. It is beautiful to the sight, and seems quite to put to shame the less fixed and immovable qualities of other natures. So it continues unchanged, until, all of a sudden, it may go wholly to pieces when called on to rudely encounter some unforeseen peril. The final crash may be precipitated by some danger seemingly small. Or perhaps the brittle moralist goes through life preserved from its ruder shocks, and so maintains his negative safety to the end.

Now innocence is not a possession to be thrown lightly aside. That, in one way or another, its place in Christian character must ultimately be taken by the stronger element of virtue is no reason why it should be given up so long as it can possibly be retained. Perils and temptations come fast, but it is useless to attempt to anticipate them by an elaborate presentation to the mind of vice and sin. Each battle of life must be fought by itself; and certainly the combatant enters upon all its struggles at a great advantage if he carries with him the consciousness of a pure heart and an unsullied mind. That person to whom the thought, or the sight, of sin retains the shock and the novelty of surprise has in this lost nothing and gained much. It is not wise to enter into temptation merely as an exercise in moral gymnastics.

But along with this sweet innocence and purity of character an element of toughness ought to go. This toughness does not destroy or belittle innocence; it is simply added to it. Of two persons of equal purity of heart and life, the one impresses all his associates with a sense of his reserve power. He has never yet been exposed to violent or uncommon temptations, but he feels himself, and he causes all his friends to see, that, God helping him, the time of sudden trial would be for him but a season of growth and victory. The other is equally unsullied, and equally averse to sight or thought of wrong. And yet he seems but a fair-weather craft, needing a warm sun and a bright sky to insure his safety. To him a sudden storm would bring untold peril, from which his safe emergence could not confidently be hoped for. There is plainly an important element in moral character which is above ordinary hatred of sin and ordinary purity of life. It is the element of toughness as opposed to brittleness.

This element of strength, this powerful protection of character, this defender of one's influence and of all who come within it, we believe to be a fruit of education rather than of inheritance or circumstance. In him who possesses it there has been growth, as well as preservation; a positive addition, as well as a negative continuance. His life has recognised the duty of progress, and has, without over-stepping the pleasant fields of integrity and innocence, made diligent use of the means of progress at every hand. Be not content, then, if your life is free from the greater sins; or if you abhor evil, and are unable to conceive the possibility of its acceptance.

Consider, rather, whether you are doing anything to gain added power; whether you are any stronger than you were a year ago, ten years ago. It is not enough if you have simply kept along in the same comparatively guileless way of life, or have remained in one safe and secluded spot. Some great storm is pretty sure to come sooner or later, and the only way to meet it lies in the preparation which belongs to the sunny days that come before.

SHOT IN MID-AIR.

SOME years ago, says a Canadian writer, the famous whirlpool, midway between Niagara Falls and Lewiston, was remarkable for the number of eagles that were often to be seen hovering over it or seated in some of the lofty pines on its edge. They were doubtless attracted to the locality by the dead bodies of animals that had come over the Falls, and that were arrested here sometimes for days together, while the summit of the towering trees afforded a fine view of whatever wild fowl passed through the gorge of the river between the two lakes, Erie and Ontario.

But if this was a noted rendezvous for these monarchs of the air, it was no less so for their enemies, the hunters of the vicinity, who thought it no mean feat to tumble them from their lofty perch with one bullet; or, more exciting still, to suddenly recall them from mid-air with the leaden messenger, while making the first of those sublime spiral sweeps upward that carry them almost beyond the range of human vision.

I was an eye-witness of a feat of this latter description, but the remembrance is not a pleasant one. I had climbed on the bank of the whirlpool one morning, on the Canadian side, when I suddenly came upon an acquaintance who was one of the best hunters in the district. I saw that something was up, as he motioned me to halt and be quiet. He was too late, however, for I made some remark on catching a glimpse of him. The next moment I heard a sound as of the flapping of mighty pinions, and two eagles sailed above us.

Their first sweep was over the whirlpool, and, what I had never observed before in such flights, they flew almost side by side. In the course of a few seconds they hung above us once more, when the hunter, now directly beneath them, took aim and fired. One seemed to hang perfectly still in the air, but there was a wild and convulsive movement on the part of the other. The latter I supposed to have been the wounded one, but the hunter assured me I was mistaken, as it was the other that was hurt mortally, and was coming down gradually. And now began a drama in the air, so touching that I shall never forget it. The bird that had not been touched flew about her wounded mate in such seeming agony and with such a show of affection that I could have wept for her. Although she could not but perceive us, she seemed to disregard our proximity; and the hunter was now too much moved himself to take advantage of the fact. Soon some heavy drops of blood fell at my feet, and in a few moments the vanquished monarch of the air reached the earth within a yard of me. When he saw us he tried to gather up his drooping plumage and regain his feet, but was too weak to accomplish either; although in his last throes he eyed us with so fierce and defiant a glare that I felt much relieved when he fell forward and expired with a feeble scream.

In the meantime the hunter had reloaded his rifle, and I was now scarcely sorry to find that he was bringing it to bear upon the solitary mate of his sad trophy that sat listlessly close by. There was a ringing noise, and she fell dead to the earth with a dull, heavy thud. There was no gleam of triumph in the eye of the hunter; for, as he gazed on both the noble creatures, recently so full of life and vigour, he said, mournfully, "I have shot my last eagle!"



["POOR CHILD, WHAT HAS STRICKEN THEE DOWN?"]

SCARCELY SINNING.

A NEW NOVEL.

BY A POPULAR AUTHOR.

CHAPTER XXIII.

I would bring balm and pour it in your wound.
Cure your distempered mind, and heal your fortunes.

From the principal door of a large and not very picturesque building a woman emerged into the soft sunlight. She was comparatively young, and her kindly, demure countenance wore a look of a rest beyond the highest peace which turbulent earth can bestow on its votaries. Above the smooth, low forehead was a narrow white band of purest linen, and her head was swathed in a black wimple.

It scarcely needed the ample flowing robes of darkest hue, or the rosary ending in the symbol of a crucified Redeemer, to mark the woman as one devoted to the service of God.

With even steps she paced along, bound on some errand of mercy, when suddenly she was called to one nearer at hand. For there, lying limp on the flower-scented turf that bordered the white roadway, she espied the prostrate form of the wanderer.

To kneel by her side, to lift the poor, heavy, weary head, to put her plump, well-formed finger upon that wrist-artery whose throbbings tell of life, was but the work of a moment.

"Poor child!" the nun breathed, in soft, pitying accents. "What has stricken thee down like this?"

But she did not lose time in vain pity and still more vain conjectures. Much contact with human wants and human woes had made her quick to conceive and to act in all the emergencies of misery.

Quickly she sped back to the convent door,

holding up her flowing skirts in order that they should not impede her progress.

Arrived there she at once summoned assistance, and soon, accompanied by a brace of stalwart lay sisters, she stood by the side of the insensible woman.

Very tenderly they raised her from the ground and bore her to the convent. There she was placed upon a couch in one of the little bare but scrupulously clean cells appropriated to the sisters.

There was not wanting medical skill amongst the little community, and they did their best. Ere long, under their gentle ministering, the wayfarer returned to consciousness, but she awoke strangely weak and even more imbecile than she had been before.

She could tell the kindly sisters nothing in answer to their many queries. What few words she uttered were spoken in a tongue unfamiliar even to the lady superior, who was held by the nuns as a great linguist, and they were set down as the gibberish of an imbecile.

They could learn nothing of her condition from her tattered garments. One thing only about her might form a clue to her identity.

It was a small gold locket which she wore around her neck, suspended by a piece of narrow velvet, which had once been black but was now a rusty brown.

The locket itself had been concealed in the girl's bosom, and when the superior gently drew it out by the sustaining piece of velvet the girl made a feeble motion of her hand to prevent the nun doing so, and again spoke some unintelligible sounds which might be words, but were neither French nor Italian nor German.

She opened the locket and disclosed the portrait of a young and very handsome man. The lady superior gazed at the pictured face earnestly and closed the golden casket with a sigh.

She was the bride of Heaven and earthly love was not for her—nor did she regret its loss; but she was a woman, tender-hearted as every true woman should be, and she could feel for and sympathise with the love of a sister woman.

The case of the little locket was set with pearls arranged in the form of a cross.

The abbess pressed her lips reverently to the sacred symbol.

"Poor child," she said, in softest pity, "thy earthly love has perchance proved a deceitful dream, and its fleeting has it may be left thee the wreck which thou art. But this sign may betoken that thou hast not embarked thy whole of hope in such frail vessel, and if thou hast turned thee before thy mind became darkened to the higher and eternal life it shall be well with thee."

The kindly sister tended the poor child so strangely thrown upon their hospitality with anxious care, they took off her poor, ragged garments and clothed her afresh in the apparel of a lay sister of their convent.

As the days went on the old wandering instinct did not return to the girl, and she seemed quietly content to abide with the sisterhood.

One of their number, who had achieved great repute as a teacher of idiots, took the poor imbecile in hand and strove hard to train her weak brain to human ways and human pleasures, but almost fruitlessly.

The girl grew, it is true, to love her would-be teacher with a strange, almost pitiable affection. She could not learn—not even the simplest thing—but she would follow Sœur Angélique as a dog might follow a beloved mistress, and was restless and unhappy when the nun was not in her sight.

Some other influences also moved her deeply. In the little convent chapel, whither they admitted her readily because she was always quiet and well-behaved, the solemn sounds of the organ and the clear, pure strains of the nuns chanting the Angelus would move the poor wail to soothing tears.

And sometimes they would find her kneeling alone before the great oaken cross, upon which, cut in pear wood, hung a gigantic figure, thorn-crowned and agonised, of the Divine One. No word of petition fluttered the curved lips, now

rosy with the hue of restored health, but a pair of great, wistful, violet eyes would fix their entreating gaze for long hours upon that face to which the Swiss sculptor's chisel had given a superhuman beauty, and would gaze at it even till the rays of sunset touched it with an added glory, and seeing this the sisters had hope.

CHAPTER XXIV.

No future hour can read my heart like this,
Save that which breaks it.

Those were sad hours which passed under the roof of the little honeysuckle-embowered cottage which nestled among the Surrey hills during the twenty-four hours which succeeded the receipt of the letter signed "Miranda Lovelace" by Mrs. Chepstow.

The widow was deeply stricken by the evil news. That the beloved child, the darling daughter around whom her affections twined, should be lying on a bed of suffering far from the reach of her mother's kindly ministrations, and left only to the good offices of strangers, was terrible. The very uncertainty of Hesba's condition gave scope for the darkest apprehensions.

Charles Chepstow suffered from an anguish little less acute than that endured by his mother, and impatient of suspense would at once have started for Switzerland had it not been that he feared to leave his mother alone at such a juncture.

Nor was Edward Thornhill much more at ease. A feeling close akin to love for the ere-while playmate of his boyish hours had grown up in his heart, and with the trouble which had overtaken the family he had the fullest sympathy.

Little sleep visited the eyelids of any of the dwellers at the pretty cottage that night, except it may be that perhaps little Ada, with the merciful obliviousness of childhood, fell into the light slumber of the young.

On the morrow the coming of the rural letter carrier was looked for with overwhelming anxiety.

At length the well-known knock resounded upon the door. Charles Chepstow and Edward Thornhill sprang up simultaneously to answer it. The former was first to reply and returned with a sombre brow, bearing a black-bordered letter and a French newspaper. Both were directed to Mrs. Chepstow.

The widow's thin fingers trembled so violently that she could scarcely tear open the envelope.

"Read it, Charley," she said, passing the letter across to her son, "I have not the strength to do so."

Young Chepstow read the few lines which the envelope contained. They carefully and kindly broke the fatal news that Hesba was no more, and referred to the newspaper forwarded by the same post for confirmation and further particulars. This letter was also signed in the name of Miranda Lovelace.

In their deep affliction it did not strike either mother or son that it was strange a French newspaper should have been forwarded, as if the sender took it for granted that they understood that language.

This time, when her worst fears were realized, the afflicted mother did not faint nor make outcry. She sat there dry-eyed and pale, motionless, save by a little twitching at the corners of the mouth.

"I knew it was so," she said, simply. "My poor darling. Let me know all, Charley, please. Read the newspaper account."

The young man obeyed. He readily found the paragraph, which was circled by an ink-line, and which briefly recapitulated the facts of the boating catastrophe, the safety of Miss Lovelace and the death of Major Percival and Miss Chepstow.

We will pass over the scene which ensued. The sorrows of a mother are sacred and such as no feeble pen can depict.

It was fated that the Chepstow family should

not be long left to the quiet endurance of their grief.

On the afternoon of the second day of bereavement it became necessary that Edward Thornhill should leave the cottage to look after his own business affairs. He could well have wished to escape such duty at a time of sorrow like that, and to have shown his deep sympathy and grief in the quiet retirement of Charles's home; but it might not be. In this world, as we all have had reason to know, the words of Charles Kingsley's pathetic lyric ever hold true:

Man must work and woman must weep,
And the sooner it's over the sooner to sleep.

Charles accompanied his friend to the railway station, Mrs. Chepstow having sought the solitude of her own chamber.

From her tearful vigil there the widow was suddenly aroused by hearing a loud summons at the knockless front door, followed presently by the sound of a man's voice and that of the little girl whom Charles had insisted she should hire to help her in the housework. Scandalized even in her sorrow by so evident an altercation as that which was going on below, and wondering much whom it could be who so rudely disregarded the signs of mourning about the house, Mrs. Chepstow descended.

On reaching the lower floor she saw, to her infinite surprise, that her visitor was young Simon Dawson.

Simon had returned from Amsterdam a few days before. The young man's mind had dwelt much, as far as business would allow, upon his rencontre with the girl whom he took to be Hesba on the piazza of the Hôtel de la Couronne at Geneva. No intelligence of the casualty on the lake had reached either his father or himself, and with the exception of certain columns the newspapers were sealed to them both. The fate of empires, the rise or fall of dynasties, the struggles in the Parliamentary arena, the annals of the criminal courts were as nothing to them. But both turned greedily to any item of financial or commercial intelligence, and the younger man kept a keen eye upon the columns devoted to the turf and upon the state of the betting.

As Mrs. Chepstow entered the room Simon saluted her in a very off-hand manner.

"How d'ye do, Mrs. Chepstow? I looked in expecting that Hesba might be here, but I can't make anything out of this muddle-headed little idiot here. She's telling me a lot of lies to hinder me from seeing your daughter—"

Mrs. Chepstow's face took just a shade of indignant colour.

"Will you please relieve me of your presence, sir?" she said, pointing to the door.

"Oh! don't come the high and mighty with me, ma'am, because that kind of thing won't go down at all. I've seen your daughter quite lately, and—"

Mrs. Chepstow's heart almost stood still with the shock of a sudden hope.

"You have seen Hesba?" she stammered.

"Yes, at Geneva—more beautiful than ever and far less coy." And the young man contorted his features into a fiendish grin. "And I want to see her again, for I've something very important to tell her."

"When did you see Hesba?" asked the widow, with a strange calm, while suppressed hope rendered her speech tremulous.

Was it possible that despite Miss Lovelace's letter and the paragraph in the French newspaper Hesba still lived?

"Well, it's some time ago now—say a fortnight."

The mother's heart sank like lead.

"Trouble me not," she said, solemnly. "My daughter is dead. She lies beneath the waters of the Genevan lake."

"Oh! come, Mrs. Chepstow. That's all rot, you know. You don't expect me to believe that. That's in the style of some of the crammers which that girl of yours has been trotting out."

It had been easy for Mrs. Chepstow to convince the insolent doubter by producing the French newspaper, but her indignation was rapidly rising and overcoming even her grief.

"It is as I have said. And even if my poor

girl were living," she went on, with rising heat, "do you suppose I would have permitted you to have speech with her—*you*—you, the evil genius of me and mine—*you*, who drove the poor child upon the world by the vile machinations of your father and yourself?"

"Keep a civil tongue in your head, ma'am," sneered Dawson, interrupting.

"You!" resumed Mrs. Chepstow, raising her voice, "to whom indirectly the death of my son is due—"

"Bosh! What had I to do with the little beggar's going to kingdom come? Look here, Mrs. Chepstow, and be advised. Another of your late husband's acceptances has turned up. The governor had reckoned it as lost, but I have lately landed upon it. It's for a tidyish sum too—'pon my soul can't think what that quiet old member did with all the cash! Ah, quiet ones are always the worst. Now I want to talk to Hesba about this bill, and I will. Is she here, or is she at Lovelace Manor? Ah, you see, I know she is with Miss Lovelace. Now it ain't no good lying—"

In the position which Simon had assumed as he stood facing the window, the outer door of the cottage as well as the two honeysuckle-twined latticed windows were behind him. Had this not been the case he would have noticed an angry face peering in at the window a few moments before, then the latch noiselessly uplifted from the outside and the door slowly and quietly pushed inwards.

Simon did not note this.

Hence, in the midst of his insolent speech to Mrs. Chepstow, he was suddenly cut short by the sensation of a set of brawny knuckles pressing on the back part of his neck, while the fingers belonging to them grasped his collar like a vice. A similar hand had seized the waistband of his trousers. At the same instant a loud voice shouted to the little maid:

"Set the door wide open, Susan, and stand aside."

Simon tried to wriggle away, but the effort was unavailing. He could not even turn round sufficiently to see his assailant's face, although he had but little doubt of his identity. The next moment he had to perform an involuntary act of "right-about-face," and found himself impelled forward with resistless force out of the cottage, along the garden path, across half-a-dozen meadows, each of which presented a rather rapid declivity.

On—on—cursing and swearing and struggling, the usurer's son was forced along. Suddenly he espied in one corner of the last meadow a big horse-pond, and had no longer any doubt of his assailant's object.

Gnashing his teeth with rage, Simon renewed the ineffectual struggle for freedom. A moment more and they were by the margin of the pond, whose thick, muddy waters received the drainage from an adjacent farmyard and whose surface was thickly covered here and there by duckweed, interspersed with stagnant patches of iridescent abomination.

He had no time for further observation of his evident destination. A pair of stalwart arms raised him completely off his feet and hurled him bodily far out into the unsavoury water.

Then Charles Chepstow turned upon his heel and without one look behind walked slowly back to the cottage.

CHAPTER XXV.

White as a white sail on a dusky sea,
When half th' horizon's clouded and half free,
Fluttering between the dun wave and the sky,
Is hope's last gleam in man's extremity.

HARDLY had Frank Leslie concealed the sheets of newspaper and pencil which he had abstracted from the desk ere the robber chief re-entered the cave, leading Mrs. Baldwin by the arm.

The lady's costume no longer bore the look of wild disarray which had marked it on the day when Frank first saw her as she was hurried past him into the robber stronghold, but her beautiful face was little less pale than it had

been then, and wore a hunted, furtive expression very sad to view.

The look of mute appeal which her dark brown orbs turned on the young man touched him deeply and intensified the chivalrous desire to gain her freedom which had already taken possession of his mind.

"You are ready, Feringhee?" demanded the dacoit.

Frank replied in the affirmative.

"Write then to the Sahib Baldwin that which I shall dictate."

Frank dipped his pen into the ink and obeyed.

The letter thus produced was terse and to the point and altogether devoid of Oriental wordiness, as much so, indeed, as the robber's ordinary speech, which was curt, not to say brutal, in a remarkable degree.

It shortly stated the facts of the inroad upon the station of Serenabad and the capture of Mrs. Baldwin, and went on to say that unless the sum of fifty thousand rupees was sent to a certain place by a certain time and under the specified conditions Mrs. Baldwin should never return.

When it was finished the dacoit made Frank read it over twice aloud, apparently with the object of testing the correctness of the reading and to discover whether any discrepancy existed, and he looked over the young man's shoulder while the latter perused the communication, apparently anxious to discover whether the number of the words corresponded with those read.

He did not, however, gain much by this.

Next Frank was instructed to address an envelope from Mrs. Baldwin's dictation, and, to the young man's great satisfaction, the station to which it was directed was not very distant from the Ghara Tal, in fact, in such close proximity that a feet-footed messenger, accustomed to the country, might be expected to reach it in a couple of days and nights, and Frank knew the dacoit chief too well to imagine that any messenger whom he might send would dare to loiter.

When all was finished and as Leslie was about to fold the written sheet an idea occurred to him.

"Will it not be well," he said, "that the lady should add a few lines to this? They will surely quicken her husband's zeal."

The robber assented, and Frank, turning the sheet of paper so that a blank page was presented, rose from his rude seat, and leading Mrs. Baldwin to it, drew the writing materials to her.

Under his direction she wrote a few loving words to her husband, which Frank had also to read to the dacoit, who expressed himself satisfied, and taking the letter led Mrs. Baldwin again into the inner cave, and committed her to the charge of the Hindoo women.

Despite the precautions taken by the wily robber Frank had succeeded in eluding him. He had added a few words to the letter which of course he had not read aloud in either of his perusals of the epistle. He dared not do this in English lest the dacoit might possibly have a man in his band who could decipher words in that language.

The message was, therefore, put into a couple of French sentences, and each word of these alternated with the English words of the letter. The young man did not doubt that such a simple device would be readily penetrated by the eyes of love and fear.

The sentence simply ran:

"We will endeavour to escape to-night. Course from the cave shall be south-west.—FRANK LESLIE."

He hoped much from this device. No doubt now existed in his mind that escape was, to say the least, highly probable. The only question was whether when the fugitives had made themselves free of the caverns, it would be possible so to shape their course through the forest and the jungle that they could reach some station or meet some of their countrymen before the robbers overtook them.

That the latter would pursue Leslie did not

doubt, and although the dacoits were not sufficiently strong to divide their forces when engaged in a predatory expedition, they were at least numerous enough to form several parties adapted to the pursuit of four or five unarmed fugitives principally women.

This had been the young Englishman's great fear. He knew the vigilance and activity of these men. His principal hope of escape had lain in the fact that, as before mentioned, they usually dispensed with setting sentinels, being confident in the inaccessibility of their refuge.

But although this confident security might have rendered it possible for him to cross the chasm he was perfectly aware that with the first beams of morning light the whole body of the dacoits would be sent out in small parties after him and that the chances in favour of himself and any companions whom he might have would not be great.

But as his hand clutched the tiny bottle which he had abstracted from the medicine chest, he felt that its acquisition had added immeasurably to the chances in his favour.

One thing only disturbed the young man's calculations. He would be burdened with three women in place of Nara only, as he had originally intended, for he had resolved that, if practicable, Mrs. Menteith should be rescued by him as well as the more recent captive.

He was the more determined upon this point as he could not learn that any communication had been made to that lady's friends, a course on the robbers' part which much surprised him, but which he learned the solution of shortly after he had written the letter for Mr. Baldwin.

Nara had seized an opportunity of speaking with him, and to her Frank gave the details of his plan in its latest development. The Hindoo girl fully understood him, and taking the bottle carefully secreted it in the folds of her scanty attire. Then Frank gave her a couple of pencilled notes to be delivered to the two captive ladies, in order to break his plan to them.

Upon receiving that for Mrs. Menteith Nara shook her head.

"I do not think that the mem-sahib will understand," she said.

"Why?" exclaimed Frank, anxiously.

"Because her brain is not clear."

"Do you mean that she is insane?"

"Yes. It is as the sahib says, or at least nearly so. Her mind is clouded by trouble. Sometimes her face is bathed with tears; at times she cries out as in sharp pain."

"She was not thus when brought hither?"

"No, nor for the first two days. Then she had hope of escape; but that has well-nigh vanished. The chief has learned to love her. She is so fair—so white and pink—so different to our brown skins—that he talks of keeping her here to himself. He can ransom her from his band by surrendering all her jewels to them."

"And she knows this?"

"I fear so. She has fallen into the strange state of which I speak. The chief is with her now."

Just at that moment a succession of wild screams rent the air, coming nearer and yet more near to the spot where Frank and Nara were conversing, under the concealment of a mass of rock which jutted up out of the floor.

Bidding Nara remain hidden Frank sprang up to ascertain the cause of the scream.

As he emerged from the rocky screen a form shot past him, swift as lightning.

It was Mrs. Menteith, and it was from her that the screams were proceeding.

In the momentary glance which Leslie caught of her face he could see that horror and intensest mental agony were marked upon it. The unfortunate woman carried her babe close clasped to her breast, and her flying steps were directed towards the mouth of the cave.

Half divining her dread object the young man sprang in pursuit.

As he did so he heard a deep voice behind him urging him on, and half turning his head over his shoulder saw the robber chief bounding along behind him.

"Quick, quick, Feringhee!" he panted.

"Freedom for you if you overtake her."

It was evident to Frank even in that moment of excitement that the same dread of Mrs. Menteith which possessed his own mind had also influenced that of the dacoit.

But the young man needed no incentive to use his best endeavours to save his countrywoman. He redoubled his exertions, but in vain. The fugitive seemed veritably to fly, and reached the brink of the chasm while yet Leslie was twenty paces off and the dacoit at least twice that number.

There was no momentary hesitation on the part of the maddened and unhappy captive. With one despairing look heavenward she clasped her infant yet more closely to her breast, and the next instant had precipitated herself from the rocky brink.

A cry of horror escaped from Frank's lips and was echoed by a deep imprecation from those of the Hindoo.

The first impulse of the young Englishman was to rush to the brink of the chasm and gaze down, with some impossible hope that Mrs. Menteith might not have perished.

He could just discern a glimpse of something white and motionless, but no faintest cry or groan rose up from the dreadful abyss.

The dacoit also advanced to the edge of the chasm and looked down.

"Curse her!" he muttered. "She has escaped me. This was the only way in which she could have done it."

Frank turned round upon the man at the words and saw that his swarthy features were convulsed with rage and disappointment.

"Is there any hope?" murmured Leslie, almost unconsciously, giving thought to the expression uppermost in his own mind.

"Hope!" responded the dacoit, with angry contempt. "Who but a Feringhee idiot would dream of hope after a fall like that? Every bone in her body is broken."

"And through your vile cruelty!" cried the young man, with sudden passionate indignation.

Something in his eyes caused the dacoit chief to recoil momentarily. He had indeed cause to fear, for Frank's first thought, in his sudden access of grief and rage, had been to hurl the robber chief over the steep to join his victim.

But the next instant the man recalled his barbarous courage, and tapping the butt of a silver-mounted pistol which rested in the broad sash which swathed him said, with a significant sneer:

"Do not dream of it, Feringhee, I have encountered too many perils to fall a victim to an unarmed foe. Be at peace and live as long as thou canst, young man."

Then as the man turned on his heel and left the place, Frank heard him mutter, in his own tongue:

"And that may not be for long."

The young man continued to stand for some time longer gazing down with moisture-blurred eyes at the speck of white which lay so still far below.

Presently he was joined by Nara, who had lain closely hidden during the recent episode, cowering in panic dread of the dacoit chief. But although not able to be a spectator she had learned the progress of the tragedy by the evidence of her ears. The shrill screams so suddenly and totally interrupted, Frank's horrified exclamations and the muttered curses of the robber had been borne on her ears clearly through the sound-conveying properties of the cavern, and hence Nara knew all.

As she stood by Frank's side the Hindoo girl murmured a few words of womanly sympathy for the mother and babe.

"Yes, it is better so," she said, at last. "The mem-sahib's lot would have been one long agony had she lived, and the pretty babe would have been either a robber or a slave as the years passed on."

In which conclusion Frank at last sorrowfully acquiesced, and, full of sad thoughts, turned from the ill-omened spot.

A few final arrangements between Nara and himself were then made. Both were aware that to the former would fall the task of assisting to

prepare the robbers' banquet. She would therefore have ample opportunities doubtless of using the contents of the abstracted bottle in the manner which Leslie proposed.

All that now remained for the young Englishman to do was to wait.

The day went slowly to his impatient spirit. His eyes reverted a hundred times to the position of the sun, his only guide to the progress of time.

At other moments he would review his plans and think out for the twentieth time all the details of the daring scheme. Everything seemed provided for. It only needed a propitious fate to render the plan at least a probable success.

At length the sun began to decline. This was the signal to begin the preparations for the banquet. These were extensive and occupied considerable time, for the men of the band were very different to the abstemious Hindoo ryot or peasant, who is content with a handful of rice and a tiny piece of ghee for a meal. These ruffians, the scum of Hindoo and Mohammedan society, had cast off the prejudices of their nominal religions and the customs of their respective races. The simple-feeding Hindoo had taken to the animal food and highly-spiced dishes of the English conqueror.

The follower of Mohammed, relinquishing the crystal spring or innocuous sherbet, drank with avidity the liquors interdicted by the prophet—strong wines and still more potent spirits.

Hence the meal which Nara and the other women provided and spread out in one of the larger caves was abundant and varied.

The women were only admitted to it in the capacity of servants—including neither Mrs. Baldwin nor Frank Leslie. The former had food sent to her in the small inner recess which formed her prison, and the portion of the latter was brought to him in the outer cave by Nara as the sun was rapidly westerning.

"All goes well, sahib," she whispered. "They have eaten like alligators when the Ganges is filled with the dead. If they will but drink the fiery liquors of the Feringhees in equal proportion, I do not know that the sahib's little bottle will be needed."

"Yes, Nara! yes," cried the young man, earnestly. "We must neglect no precaution. A drunken man may awaken. A drugged one rarely does. Take care that all—man, woman and child—have their portion of the contents of the little phial."

Nara bowed her dusky head in assent.

"It shall be as the sahib commands," she said.

"Have you given my note to the lady?" he continued.

"Yes, sahib."

"And she—"

"Made many demonstrations of joy and signs that she would risk life itself for the hope of escape."

"It is well, Nara," rejoined Frank. "Now leave me, lest the suspicions of that crafty villain be aroused."

The Hindoo girl obeyed and glided away noiselessly to the scene of the robber revels.

The hours passed on. Frank could hear from time to time snatches of barbaric songs, fits of frantic laughter and bursts of merriment borne on the air from the carousing crew.

There was naught of the solemn sedateness of the true Oriental about these riotous robbers in their cups, but indeed they had lost both nationality and faith when they took the common characteristics of outcast and villain.

At length as evening drew on apace the sounds of mirth became fainter and less frequent. Frank began to grow impatient and apprehensive at the lateness of the hour, and paced the front of the outer cave with rapid, irregular steps. Suddenly he heard a light step behind him.

It was Nara.

"All goes well," she said. "The men require my services no longer. I will now see to the more difficult part of my duty—that of deceiving the women."

Again ensued a long and wearisome interval of waiting for the young Englishman. A few

fitful snatches of song, or a weak, inebriated fit of laughter had from time to time smote his ear, gradually less and less frequent. At length they died wholly away.

Shortly after Nara again sought Leslie.

Even in the imperfect light Frank could see that something had transpired to trouble the Hindoo.

"What is amiss?" he queried, anxiously.

In a few words the girl informed him that all the dwellers in the caverns, both men and women, were locked in sleep with two exceptions beside themselves.

One of these was Mrs. Baldwin, the other the spiteful old woman whom we found taunting Leslie on our first acquaintance with the robber cave.

"She would drink nothing," said Nara, almost crying with vexation, "and sits at the entrance of the women's cave glowering at her sleeping mates and clearly suspicious that something is wrong."

Frank Leslie's brow clouded and he remained for a space in profound thought.

"I have it!" he exclaimed, at length, with some exultation. "The small case with the bottles remains in the food cave?"

The woman assented.

"Good! Go to Mrs. Baldwin, and on a sudden do you both scream out violently. Our watchful enemy will not fail to rush in in order to ascertain the cause of your outcries. Tell her any tale that may occur to you; then let her go out again, and leave the rest to me."

Nara bowed and returned to the interior caves. Frank took off his boots and followed her silently at some little distance, halting at the entrance to the large cave where the banquet had taken place, adjacent to which was the smaller rocky recess where the stores of provisions were husbanded.

Peering into the banqueting-place, which was well lighted by torches of resinous pine-wood stuck into clefts in the rocky walls, Frank saw the slumbering robbers lying about in all directions, as they had succumbed to the combined effects of glutinous and intoxication, powerfully aided as were these causes by the opiate which Nara had mixed with the wine and arrack.

"The laudanum has done its work well," Frank murmured.

Just then the expected shriek rang out from the recesses of the inner cave. Not a moment was to be lost.

Frank sprang across half a dozen prostrate forms and rushed into the recess where the little medicine chest was deposited. With rapid movements he selected a tiny phial, poured some of its contents on a handkerchief which he had drawn from his pocket, hurried through the women's cave, where the floor was covered with slumbering women as the outer cave had been by sleeping dacoits, and stood at the rock-hewn entrance to the cave where Mrs. Baldwin was kept captive.

He had not taken his stand there five minutes when the old woman emerged, grumbling horribly and using all kinds of Indian imprecations.

It was clear that her suspicions were aroused. This might easily constitute a great danger, for Frank knew enough of the vindictive virago's temper and courage to be aware that if she possessed herself of some of the arms of the sleeping robbers she might hold him at bay, or at least render it impossible that an enterprise which required time, like the moving of the bridge, should be carried out.

So the moment the woman came forth Frank sprang noiselessly upon her, seized her round the waist with his right arm and with his left hand pressed the chloroform-saturated handkerchief over her nostrils and mouth.

The attack was so sudden that the woman made but a feeble resistance, and the powerful anæsthetic soon reduced her to perfect quietness and immobility.

Frank laid her down gently.

"The effects of the drug will not be sufficiently lasting for our purpose," he muttered. "I must take further precautions."

With deft, dexterous, and yet tender hands—for was she not a woman still?—Frank bound her hand and foot with scarfs taken from the sleepers and carefully gagged her in such wise that she should sustain no injury from the operation.

He did not deem such precaution necessary in the case of the other occupants of the cave. The effects of the opiate would not be so transient.

(To be Continued.)

FACETIÆ.

BRIC-A-BRAC AT KNOWSLEY.

MR. GLADSTONE is a great collector. He has lately got hold of a fine specimen of Real Derby, which he intends to place in his Cabinet. Punch.

UNHAPPY THOUGHT.

TOMMY: "I mean to be an astronomer when I grow up."

EFFIE: "What on earth will you do with yourself all day long?" Punch.

BUSINESS AS BEFORE.

ACQUAINTANCE: "Been and changed your numbers, haven't they?"

OXFORD STREET TRADESMAN: "Oh, I don't bother me. I've always taken care of 'Number One,' and I mean to stick to it." Punch.

A WIRE.

FROM THE IRISH PIG THAT WON'T PAY THE RENT TO THE DUTCH BOER.—Signed the Convention, have you? 'Dad then, if you've caved in, I think I'll be after following your example. Punch.

GENUINE SPECIMEN OF "FROZEN MEAT."—The cold shoulder. Punch.

"LEADING STRINGS."—Those of the first violin in an orchestra. Punch.

The Itchen Boating Club ought always to be ready to provide a scratch crew. Punch.

GENERAL VERDICT ON THE ORGANIZATION OF MR. PARCELL AND FRIENDS.—Ill-League-all. Funny Folks.

THE COOL RECEPTION IRELAND DECLARES SHE ALWAYS RECEIVES.—Just-ice. Funny Folks.

A GOOD HIGH DEER.

WE see that Colonel Dornie shot a magnificent stag a few days ago in the forests of Achnacarry. The animal was Achna-carried home, and "was found to possess a splendid pair of horns, four men being able to stand between the tips." This is one of those horn-amental trophies of the forest which are "few and far between." Funny Folks.

A "MEETING THAT ALWAYS 'MAKES AMENDS.'"—When people "meet with their deserts." Funny Folks.

Hired Hands.—Foot-men. Moonshine.

FREE TRADE.—Making capital by spouting. Moonshine.

WHOM did the mouse-trap, and what did the pig-eat? Moonshine.

A CAPITAL SONG.—£. s. d. Moonshine.

BITING CANNIBALISM.—Biting east winds. Moonshine.

A LIGHT SUPPER.—A Feast of Lanterns. Moonshine.

"I'm a little son burnt," as the young five-year-old cried, after he had tried to imitate his father by snuffing the candle with his fingers. Moonshine.

OUCHT not every hat-peg to be gilded in order to render it as hat-rack-tive as possible? Judy.

If a vicar falls sick with a headache, oughtn't he to take immediate steps to curate? Judy.

GENERAL OPINION OF THE PREMIER.—"He went for the trees at Hawarden with his axe last Saturday week. Never knew such a feller!" Punch.

SONG SUGGESTED BY THE TRANSVAAL AND THE LAND LEAGUE.—"When we were Boers together." Punch.

POLICY AND POLICEY.

Police in the garden
Are guardin' at Hawarden
And watching with great circumspection;
So Gladstone is made
To give up Free Trade,
And compelled to go in for Protection.

Punch.

Mrs. RAMSBOTHAM says what's the good of knowing geography when she has bought half-a-dozen maps of the world, and can't find the Specific Ocean on any one of them? Punch.

People most "dependent on the soil" are washerwomen and glove-cleaners. Punch.

GOUTY VEGETABLE.—A toe-martyr.

Punch.

A VERY SILLY CONUNDRUM INDEED.—If a learned pig were to be raised to the peerage—how can you say such silly things?—what title would he most likely assume?—The Marquis of Cunning-ham. Right! Judy.

IT'S VERY ODD

That, although young ladies make up their faces to any extent, they cannot always find young gentlemen who will make up their minds.

That our police of the present day should be considered so extremely stupid, whilst they are in the constant practice of taking people up.

That the more coaled a fire is the more heat it displays.

That work-houses should be the resort of lazy people.

That the good wine we drink at a dinner party should cause us to take a winding way home.

That the more you may knock down a man the more is he knocked up. Judy.

BIRTH: BOYSON.

("The wife of A. P. Boyson, of a daughter.")

STRANGE that these A. P. parents' latest

joy,

A Boyson, should be neither son nor boy.

Funny Folks.

THE "MADEL" WALTZ.—The pretty dance that Miss Wilberforce has led the powers that be.

Funny Folks.

VERY MUCH MARY-IED.

An enterprising sort of man has just married for the fifth time, his present and four previous brides being all named Mary. And yet this energetic Benedict has never been troubled with process for the offence of Polly-gamy!

Funny Folks.

A BOND OF FATE.

A NEW NOVEL.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

"A Winsome Wife," "So Fair Her Face," &c., &c.

CHAPTER XXXI.

ANDREW'S ADVENTURE.

And he that stands upon a slippery place
Makes nice of no vile hold to stay him up.

ANDREW was not mad, but he had had an adventure—a thing which did not often happen in his somewhat humdrum life. He had gone about for many years for his master to all sorts of places, without ever meeting with anything out

of the common, but on this particular day he certainly did chance upon something strange.

His errand took him to Richmond to a little cottage on the outskirts where the old woman lived who owned the carvings that Mr. Pemberton wanted. Finding the old lady not at home he went for a stroll. He dearly loved the country and the park looked green and pleasant after the dusty streets and dry pavements of London. He was a good walker for an old man, and he had soon got right away from the town to quite a secluded place on the opposite side of the park.

"I wonder who lives in the Red House now," he said to himself, as he came in sight of a somewhat lonely house where he used to live in his younger days.

It was a rambling old place, and when Andrew knew it it had been a very comfortable family dwelling-place. Its owner was in easy circumstances and the servants were well housed and fed and consequently contented.

Andrew had been footman there and remembered the time when he had lived there with pleasure. He had never been in the neighbourhood of the house since, though he had spent the greater part of the time in London.

There had been considerable alteration, but the place was recognisable. The shape of the house remained the same, though there had been sundry additions and a wall had been built all round what used to be the flower garden. The windows looked odd—most of them were protected in some way in the inside and were only open at the top. It looked altogether gloomy and forsaken.

"Looks like a jail or a workhouse," Andrew said to himself. "I'm sorry I've seen it like that. It was a pretty place in the times gone by."

A little past the gate he met a man coming from the house.

"Who lives here?" he asked.

"Doctor Vickers," was the short reply.

"It is the Red House, ain't it?" Andrew asked again.

"No it ain't," was the gruff answer. "It's Laburnum Villa."

"And what is it—is it a Penitentiary? It looks like one."

"It's Doctor Vickers's establishment, and I'm blessed if I don't think you are fit to come to it," the man said, in a curt, uncivil tone. "Did you never see the outside of a lunatic asylum before?"

"Oh, that's what it is, is it? A mad-house, eh?"

"That's the plainest name to give it, I suppose; and what do you want here?"

"Nothing, but to see the old place again. I was a servant in the house once, before it came down like this. It was a pleasant place enough then."

"It ain't a pleasant place now, I'll take my oath of that," the man said. "What with the visiting inspectors and the worrit of the fools inside and the things we are obliged to do and never know a minute when we may not be obliged to have everything ready for inspection, it's enough to worry the flesh off a man's bones—that's what it is."

He went on his way in a snappish frame of mind, caused by his having been severely reprimanded concerning a patient whose back when examined at his own request showed more than the orthodox amount of bruises, and Andrew passed on too, to turn back after a minute or two and look at the house again.

"A madhouse, eh?" he said to himself.

"Well, well, who'd have thought it?"

He had no particular object in returning, but he felt curious. He heard voices in the grounds that lay along the side of the house where he was standing, and he climbed on a heap of stones that happened to be there and looked over the wall.

There was nothing to be seen differing from what might be found in the garden of any

lunatic asylum that was decently conducted. There were the usual eccentric-looking creatures scattered about in charge of their keepers, and allowed sufficient freedom as it seemed. There was an air of listless languor about them very painful to see, and Andrew looked in vain for any trace of enjoyment or cheerfulness. They were talking to one another and the keepers, some of them beckoning to others who were in the house at the windows, and to one of these Andrew looked up without thinking, following the gaze of one of the poor creatures below.

There was a white, wild face there looking straight to where he was with great, earnest eyes and pallid cheeks, and Andrew rubbed his eyes and wondered whether he was awake or dreaming, for the face was the face of his master's friend who had gone away. It was Paul Geldart who was staring at him, and for a minute he felt as if the whole place—Red House, grounds, windows and all—was going round in a wild dance and that he should lose his senses.

He knew Paul and Paul knew him. He saw a look of eager expectation and joy come into the white face at the window, and he had just time to make a sign of recognition when the watcher was pulled back from behind and he saw him no more.

"I must go," he said to himself. "I must tell the master what I have seen. I have made no mistake; it was Mr. Geldart; the master was right; there is some devilish jugglery going on, and the answer to the riddle is here."

He did not get away a moment too soon. A tall, powerful-looking man came out of the house and went round the walls carefully, but Andrew had disappeared.

"It was all nothing, Burridge," he said, when he went in again. "It was only to the people in the garden he was making signs."

"It was to someone over the wall, sir."

"Very well, you know what to do if we receive a visit. Let the gentlemen see everything the house contains. Let them go up the chimneys if they will and into all the cupboards. We have no secrets here."

"Very good, sir," the man said, with a grin.

"And be sure you treat that man with special care; don't let him suspect you saw him. He won't have the chance of looking out of the window again in a hurry."

"I can't think how he got it now, sir. He was safe in No. 6 a moment before."

"They are very cunning," Doctor Vickers said, for it was the doctor himself who had gone out after Andrew. "It takes all a sane man's brains to keep up with them. He must be kept to the rooms looking into the courtyard. Mind, I shall hold you responsible, Burridge, in future."

"Very good, sir," said Burridge, in a tone that sounded as if he thought it very bad.

And the man whom Andrew had seen at the window had no further chance of taking a peep at the outside world from that part of the house.

"Tell me all over again, Andrew," Mr. Pemberton said, when Andrew had finished his story. "It sounds too improbable to be really true."

"It's gospel truth, every word of it."

"I don't disbelieve you, Andrew. I am only doubtful whether you may not have made a mistake."

"I haven't, sir. It was Mr. Geldart I saw, and he knew me, I am sure of that."

"Then Heaven helping me I'll get to the bottom of the business somehow," Mr. Pemberton said. "What is the proprietor's name? Tell me again."

"Dr. Vickers, sir."

Mr. Pemberton could not sleep that night. If Andrew's tale was not all hallucination here was the clue to all that was strange in Paul Geldart's disappearance. He had been spirited away instead of going of his own accord, and kept in durance vile as a lunatic ever since.

He went with his story to the detective officer who had helped him before. He was courteously listened to; but the police are slow to believe anything that savours of romance.

"We will help you, of course," was the answer he received, "but these things generally turn out to be a blunder. Your man was probably mistaken."

"I don't think so. Andrew was as positive as a man could be, and he knew my friend well."

"But you have heard from your friend since he left—received money from him for his child. How could those letters be forgeries?"

"I am not prepared to say how, but I am convinced they were."

"Then someone must have a powerful motive for wanting him out of the way."

"Someone has."

"You are sure of it?"

"Yes."

"Who is it?"

"I cannot tell you that. To do so would be to upset all that I want to do entirely. If you can help me, do; but I cannot tell you anything but that I believe the man I want to find is shut up in a lunatic asylum called Laburnum Villa, the other side of Richmond Park."

"We will do all we can," again said the detective, "but we can only go to work in the ordinary way. This Doctor Vickers's house can be visited and searched, that is all, unless we have a warrant for his apprehension on any charge."

"I don't see how that could be managed," Mr. Pemberton said, "though if that poor fellow is there, as I firmly believe he is, the doctor richly deserves it. But we can search first. If he is in the house they cannot conceal him from us, surely."

"You have not had the searching of many lunatic asylums, that's very evident," the officer said. "You will find the place all swept and garnished and the patients ready to swear they were never so happy in their lives before and don't want to go out—not they; and if the doctor has anything to hide he will be most polite to you and laugh in his sleeve at you all the while, with his secret as securely kept as if it had never been in jeopardy. In what capacity shall I go with you?—your lawyer or your doctor? I can be a parson at a pinch and look it."

"Perhaps as my friend—the lawyer if you will. I shall take another person with me in the character of a friend, pure and simple. If he find another person there amongst the assistants that he has been looking for some time you shall have the warrant for the arrest of someone very shortly."

"You speak in riddles at present," the officer said, "but you shall have your own way, Mr. Pemberton. Bring your friend, and I only hope we shall find the person you want. There's another thing which you have not taken into consideration. The person you want may be really mad. He may be a fit person to be in an asylum."

"There was no need to keep it a secret if such were the case," Mr. Pemberton said. "It would have been hardly worth all the money I have received, as the fact would have done away with the necessity for getting rid of him. No one would listen to a madman except out of pity."

It was Gerard Montague that he proposed to take with him. He knew the man by sight that he had seen with Miss Esmond in her carriage that day, and if he were there they might almost make sure that Paul Geldart was there too.

The three were received with the utmost cordiality at Laburnum Villa, and asked what patient they wished to see, and when they mentioned Paul Geldart's name the polite assistant said he would call the doctor. He did not remember ever having heard that name in the house.

Dr. Vickers came—tall, dark, and grave-looking—the same man that Gerard had seen sitting in Miss Esmond's carriage—the man who had been sent from the workhouse at Kensington to take away his father's crazy servant.

"I have had the pleasure of seeing Dr. Vickers before," he said, quietly, though with ill-concealed disgust, "under a different name, I believe, and in very different circumstances."

"Very," replied the master of Laburnum Villa, as quietly. "I was somewhat down on my luck then, Mr. Montague. You see I remember you perfectly. My having been forced to earn my bread then in the best way I could, and poor bread it was, did not disqualify me for doing something better when it offered. My diploma will stand inspection I can assure you."

CHAPTER XXXII.

THE OTHER END OF THE CLUE.

Foul deeds will rise,
Though all the earth o'erwhelm them, to men's eyes.

GERARD MONTAGUE bowed slightly. There was something in the man's insouciant assurance inexpressibly annoying, and his dark face wore a look of triumph. He knew his visitors and guessed what they had come for as soon as he heard their names, and he knew too that they would not find what they sought.

"I do not doubt your possession of the credentials necessary to keep this house," Mr. Montague said. "A diploma is very easily obtained on the Continent, Dr. Vickers."

"Mine is correct, I assure you," was the cool reply; "and now, gentlemen, your business, if you please."

Mr. Pemberton explained. They wished to see one of his patients; they knew he was there, for he had been seen by someone who knew him.

"All my patients can be seen at any time," Dr. Vickers replied. "I do not know the name you mention. It is not on my books."

"But the person is in your house."

"Under some other name then. You are welcome to see every patient I have. Is this gentleman interested in the person too?"

He said this with rather an uneasy look at the officer, who had not spoken, and whose face he fancied he knew. There was nothing whatever official in his appearance. He was quietly dressed and seemed like what he wished to pass for, a legal friend of the other two.

"So far that he would like to see your house and your patient, that is all."

"With all my heart."

Dr. Vickers rang the bell, and it was answered immediately by a quiet-looking young woman in a servant's dress.

"That is patient number one," he said.

"That girl?" Mr. Pemberton said.

"Yes. She was one of my worst cases. Our system has agreed with her, you see. Tell Sorby to bring the books, Sarah," he went on, addressing the girl. "These gentlemen wish to find someone."

She left the room, and he turned again to his visitors.

"You shall see everything that I can show you," he said, "and talk as freely as you like to my servants. We have nothing to conceal at Laburnum Villa."

"Too open by half," whispered the detective into Gerard Montague's ear. "Watch and listen and say nothing. We shall come at the truth somehow before we leave."

A man with an extremely civil manner but a hard, cruel face brought the books and waited further orders.

"That will do, Sorby," the doctor said.

He did not even tell the man that the visitors would go over the house presently, but the detective's sharp eye caught a glance passing from one to the other, as if they understood each other thoroughly well, and he made a mental note of the fact, as a useful hint for further guidance.

The books were capably kept. Every entry in them was made with marvellous precision. There were records of patients who had come and gone, letters from some who had gone out cured, testifying to the kindness and care they had enjoyed while at Laburnum Villa.

There were others from grateful friends, thanking the doctor for the improvement in their loved ones, and testimonials from visitors of all degrees, concerning the excellent way in which the house was conducted, etcetera. One or two patients were recorded as having died and many more as having left cured.

"One you see has left this morning," Dr. Vickers said, taking up a loose slip of paper. "I allow nothing to pass without due entry. Joseph Hargreaves went out quite cured, I am happy to say."

Again the look of complacent triumph, and the detective whispered once more to Gerard Montague.

"Our man," he said. "He will give us the clue very soon if I am not mistaken. He is too sure of himself and Mr. Pemberton."

"Mr. Pemberton believes him, I think," Mr. Montague said, in the same low tone.

"Seems to," was the quiet answer.

The doctor, talking earnestly to Mr. Pemberton about some of his cases, marked the little conversation.

"I'm more than a match for you, gentlemen," he said to himself. "You won't find what you want at Laburnum Villa. Yes, that was the name I had the poor fellow under," he said, aloud, in answer to a question from Mr. Pemberton; "for anything I know it was his real name. There are cases of course in which persons are sent to lunatic asylums under an assumed name, but I imagine they are rare. There is generally no reason for such a course. No one knows the names of my patients except those in the house and those interested in them."

"And this Joseph Hargreaves—was he a bad case?"

"Very. When he came here he was suffering from one of the very worst phases of insanity—a silent, stubborn mania—fancied himself someone else, and was full of the most morbid delusions that ever filled a human head. I never expected to cure him."

"Yet you succeeded?"

"Perfectly. He has gone to his family in Yorkshire. He will always be a little eccentric, I daresay, but there will be no more madness."

He touched the bell as he spoke and another man entered the room.

"These gentlemen will go over the house, Higgins," he said, quietly. "You will go with them and tell Mrs. Martin and the rest of them that I wish them to see every patient. They are seeking someone whom they fancy is here, but if he is it is under another name."

"He will be sure to declare his right name,"

Mr. Pemberton said to the doctor. "Have you no one here who says his name is Paul Geldart?"

Both doctor and assistant looked the picture of innocence, and exchanged glances of surprise.

"I think not," Dr. Vickers said, blandly, "but you can question them all for yourselves. I have never heard anyone claim that name. Have you, Higgins?"

"No, sir," said Higgins, demurely, and they began their tour of inspection.

Everything was in apple-pie order throughout the house. The dormitories were spotlessly clean, and the patients looked well fed and neat, as far as they could be made so. The visitors were allowed to move freely about amongst them and talk to them as they liked. No one knew anything of Paul Geldart; the name was evidently unfamiliar to them all.

Dr. Vickers took them to the padded room, which it was sometimes necessary to use, and showed them all the instruments he employed for the restraint of violent cases, a straight jacket of the most merciful description and a well-wadded strap or two. Every corner of the house was shown them, from garret to basement, and there was no trace of any other besides those they saw about.

Even the sick, and they were few, were visited, and they looked into two cell-like places where unfortunate creatures, unfit even for the padded room, were kept in solitude and semi-darkness, though perfectly clean and well attended to. There were phases of mental dis-

order in which this treatment was necessary the doctor told his visitors. But neither of these afflicted creatures bore the slightest resemblance to Paul Geldart.

They were silenced but not convinced, but Mr. Pemberton came to the conclusion that he had been right and that Andrew was under a delusion in fancying he had seen Paul Geldart there.

Just as they were re-entering the house after their tour of inspection round the grounds one of the keepers, a quiet-looking man, planted himself right in the way of the detective. There was a momentary flash of recognition in the keen eyes and a hurried whisper from the asylum assistant.

"Barnes Common—outside the station tonight at eight o'clock," was all he said, and a hasty nod was the only answer, and then he went about his business, and the detective turned to the doctor.

"Is that one of your assistants?" he asked. "Yes; in some things the most valuable one I have," he replied. "He has the quickest eye for finding out anything, and is the best reader of faces I ever had. It was his business once—he was one of the sharpest detectives in the force, but he got into trouble, and was glad to take anything that offered when he had done his term of imprisonment. You will take a glass of wine, gentlemen, after your round? Most people find it fatiguing—we are used to it, of course."

They drank his wine, Mr. Pemberton mystified, Gerard Montague somewhat puzzled but relying on what the officer had said and hopeful in consequence, and the detective laughing in his sleeve and drinking confusion to his host in every sip of the really good wine he set before them.

They signed their names in the visiting-book before they left and expressed themselves very much pleased with all they had seen, and then they went away, the doctor looking after them with a malevolent grin on his dark features.

"Let him out, Higgins," he said to one of his myrmidons, "they won't come back, and I don't want to kill him quite, poor devil."

The man laughed, and they went together to a trap in the stable yard. It was covered with straw, and a pauper lunatic had been busy working there when the gentlemen came round. He had no notion of what was in the cellar below or he might have opened his mouth inconveniently.

It was well for the doctor under the circumstances that Mr. Pemberton had not brought Andrew with him, as he had once purposed doing, for, from his previous acquaintance with the interior of the house, he would have inevitably remembered and exposed the existence of this cellar, and it would have been awkward if the visitors had requested to see it.

Various things were kept there of which Dr. Vickers' admirers had no cognisance—handcuffs and rods and straight jackets of a very different construction to the innocent article on exhibition, and two patients, whose presence might have been awkward and their tongues indiscreet. They were shaking and shivering, for the cellar had been both dark and cold.

"Now then, get out of this," the keeper said to them, "you can't do any harm now."

One of them gibbered and moaned only, the other, a dark man with eyes marvellously like little Paul's, looked keenly at the man but said nothing.

"Relief will come," he muttered, "they are looking for me. That poor wretch was only put in with me to blind Mr. Heaven send that it may come in time, that's all."

What he meant by "in time" was best known to himself, Mr. Pemberton would have understood perhaps if he had heard him say it.

"Your man is there, gentlemen," the detective said to them, as they got out of sight of Laburnum Villa.

"You are sure of that?" asked Mr. Montague.

The master of the Garden House did not feel as sanguine as his companion.

"If he is not there I shall soon know where he is."

"How?"

"I am going to see one of Doctor Vickers's keepers to-night at eight o'clock, and he will give me all the information I want. If your friend is not there I shall know where he is and all about him before I come back to town."

"But how—when?" gasped Mr. Pemberton, too excited to be lucid. "When did you make the appointment? You have never been out of our sight for a minute, and you spoke to no one but us."

"No; but Datchet and I understand each other very well indeed. We used to work together when he was in the force, and till he got into trouble there wasn't a better man for his business. He gave me a word or two and a sign that I understood."

"But he is in that man's pay."

"He'll do anything for me for all that. I've done him many a good turn in the days gone by, and he hasn't forgotten it. I dare say your friend has spoken to him if he isn't frightened out of his life. But he needn't be afraid of Datchet."

"I'll make Datchet's fortune if he help us to what we want," Mr. Pemberton said. "But suppose the doctor won't let him meet you?"

"The doctor won't know, sir. But I shall hear from him somehow. He's more than a match for that man or he is not the fellow he was."

CHAPTER XXXIII.

AS GOOD AS HIS WORD.

Stone walls do not a prison make,
Nor iron bars a cage.

MR. DATCHET proved himself more than a match for Dr. Vickers. If that gentleman had any suspicion of him he did not show it, and he was allowed to take his usual evening out and meet his friend, of which latter fact the doctor knew nothing. He lounged about a little, as he often did, being a man with no near friends in the neighbourhood, and then took himself off, somehow managing to leave an impression behind him that he was going to Mortlake.

His old acquaintance was at Barnes station to meet him, and soon learned from him all that he wanted to know.

Paul Geldart was there, at least a man answering to his description was one of the two let out of the cellar in the yard after the visitors had left. Datchet had never had anything to do with that particular lunatic. Indeed, great care was taken that he should not go near him, but he knew of him and had seen him.

He was said to have been very violent and unmanageable when first brought in, but was very quiet now—watchful most likely—Datchet said, if he were sane, as they said he was; it was only the real mad ones that kept on being outrageous when once they found out where they were and that violence was of no use.

It was Paul Geldart without a doubt. The scar would have identified him anywhere. He had been called Joseph Hargreaves to the visitors and was said to have left.

"I know where they put him," Datchet said. "I was sent out for something, and it was all done while I was away and the poor devils in the place all shut up in their rooms. But they can't blind me. There's a handy cellar for all that sort of thing, and he was down under your feet all the while you were there."

"He must be got out, Datchet."

"Yes."

"And you must do it."

"It won't be an easy job, and it will mean running away myself," Datchet said, doubtfully, "and places aren't so easy got for me now, you know."

"You bring that man out safe and you shall be no loser," the officer said. "You shall have some way found for you to get a living, never fear. It would be better if you could manage his escape and stay there awhile yourself. They wouldn't be so much fuss then. They will hardly dare to seek for him very much when he has once got away."

"The doctor will be more likely to take the

money and say nothing about it, if it isn't found out directly," Datchet said. "He does not stick at a lie or two to gain his own ends. But you must give me some money. If I am to do it successfully it will cost something."

"You shall have anything in reason. I think I can promise you that. Are letters safe?"

"Mine are. It is part of my business to go to the post office."

"Ah, then you will find one there for you tomorrow, with a five or so in it, and you must let me know what I can send you from town. There must be no man of that patient's description seen anywhere about here, you know."

Mr. Datchet intimated that he understood perfectly and the two separated—the one to go back to town and the other to return to his duties, as stolid and unconcerned as it was his wont to be.

Mr. Pemberton in town was far more excited over what was going on than either of the men who were concerned in helping him. He took Lillian into his confidence and astonished her not a little by telling her that he expected Paul Geldart back.

"I was right, my child," he said. "He never was out of England. It is a mercy he was not murdered outright. The hand that sent him to bed amongst lunatics would not have stepped at murder."

"Not if it could be accomplished with anything like safety," Lillian said, with a sigh. "But England is not like the wilds of Central America. A man cannot be left for dead here in London without inquiries being made."

Nothing was seen of Paul Geldart, but about a week after the visit to Laburnum Villa an old man with a white beard and hair and a shrunken, pallid face called at the Garden House and asked for Mr. Pemberton.

The disguise was perfect. Andrew, who was called in, did not know him till the wig was pulled off and the face of Paul Geldart revealed.

They took him into the inner room and made sure that the tell-tale little slide was carefully shut before he ventured to talk to him.

"You must be in America for awhile yet," Mr. Pemberton said. "When the blow is struck it must be swift and sure, and if any notion of your whereabouts get about people will be on their guard and our plan will be spoilt."

"I can wait for my revenge," Paul Geldart said, sternly. "It will be all the sweeter, and I will make sure of it this time. This last outrage has only added a little to the debt I owe."

"How did it come about?" Mr. Pemberton asked. "How were you spirited away without anyone knowing? I should have thought such a thing impossible in these days."

"Nothing is impossible where there are plenty of money and good tools to work with. Do you know where I disappeared from?"

"From Winchester Gardens, I imagine."

"Exactly. I received a note asking me to go there. Matters might be arranged it said. And I was fool enough to go. It wasn't a pleasant interview, as you may think. And I left, promising that I would do my very worst—what I shall do now with added zest. I had not been gone out of the house two minutes before a man stopped me and told me he had been sent after me with a message."

"From that woman? I asked."

"Not from a woman at all, sir," he said, civilly enough, "from Mr. Pemberton."

"Oh! my name was brought into the matter, was it?" Mr. Pemberton asked.

"Yes, I suppose they thought it would be a sure bait, and so it was. You were waiting for me, they said, at a place they named. They told me what for, and I, like a fool, did not stop to think that you did not know where I had gone, and went with them."

"To Laburnum Villa?"

"No, to a house not far away. I don't know the names of the streets. I was told you were there. I was shown into a room where two men were sitting—the man who calls himself Dr. Vickers (and he is Dr. Vickers, so far as I know) and another. They were waiting for you, they said, and I had a glass of wine with them, and then—well, after that the rest is all a blank."



[WITH A LOW CRY SHE RANK AT LADY HESTER'S FEET INSENSIBLE.]

"A blank?"

"Yes. I have a vague recollection of their seeming to grow larger as I looked at them and of trying, or fancying I tried, to rush at them. Then after that nothing, till I woke up in a room at that house and found myself transformed into Joseph Hargreaves and told I was mad."

"But did you make no effort to escape?"

"Did I not? I did all that any man—mad or sane—could have done. I was helpless, without money or clothes, for both had vanished in the dark time when I lay insensible and at their mercy. You don't know what the inside of a private madhouse is or you would not be surprised that I had no chance of escaping till help came from the outside. I was almost mad when they put me down in that cellar the other day."

"They shall be amply repaid," Mr. Pemberton said, "every one of them. The game is in our hands now, my boy."

"Where is she?"

Paul Geldart asked the question with a dark look on his pale face. His tormentors had very nearly succeeded in making him the madman that Joseph Hargreaves was supposed to be, and there was something in the glitter of his dark eyes that told pretty plainly that his revenge, when he could compass it, would be swift and sure.

"Abroad," Mr. Pemberton said.

"Where?"

"I don't know—somewhere in retirement till her intended husband has obeyed his mother's behest."

"And that is?"

"To wait twelvemonths—the time is running by very fast—the time of probation is nearly over."

"I wonder the lady could give up the delights of London life and the admiration of the gentlemen to bury herself on the Continent. In the old days she would have sold herself to the devil almost for a ball or a new dress."

"I fancy the lady cannot very well help herself," Mr. Pemberton said, meaningly, "the wherewithal to supply her extravagances is running short."

"Are you sure of this?"

"Quite sure. What she represented as income when she first made her appearance in London was really capital, and she has drawn on it till she has very little left. There is an income of course, but Mr. Dalton will find it marvellously small."

"And he is young you say?"

"Her junior by seven or eight years, I should say."

"And in his right senses?"

"A bright, handsome young fellow."

"And is fascinated by her?"

"He is not the first."

"No, but he shall be the last. She shall work no more witchery with her devilish eyes and her soft voice. The world shall know her as she really is."

"I fancy a great deal of the world knows or at least suspects now. Miss Esmond is not nearly the popular woman she was once. There is one thing I am at a loss to understand in this business."

"What is that?"

"Who it was that personated you when you were supposed to have gone to America. It was someone who knew all about your life, and the shark business, and who must have been very like you to boot, for the description answered so well that it was recognised in an instant."

"There are plenty of men in the world dark and black haired," Paul Geldart replied. "Miss Esmond is a clever woman and a good schemer, but as far as I am concerned she has schemed her last. She paid someone to tell the lies and do the swaggering, and thought I was safe in the charge of the fiend in human form down yonder at Richmond."

No one knew who the old man was who came to the Garden House. He was not there much.

He took a lodging in the house where Lillian's little home was and kept very much to himself. The person who had sent him to Laburnum Villa remitted the money as usual, and was told all was well, that the patient was much the same and would never be any different.

Kathleen Esmond smiled as she put away the letter—a wicked smile that Chester Dalton would have been amazed to see on her beautiful face.

"Safe!" she said, "quite safe! never to trouble me more."

"A letter, miss," her maid said, entering the room with it on a salver.

"Oh, is the post in, Suzanne?"

"Yes, miss."

"From Chester or his mother, I suppose," she said, taking it up and turning to Lady Hester. "I wonder if they will join us at Mentone. It will be just the place for the old lady."

She talked about her future like an innocent woman, and made her plans, now that her *bête noir* was removed, as if she had not a care in the world. She opened the letter and said nothing to her companion about its contents, but Lady Hester saw that her face wore a look of awful horror as she read it. It was like the face of a long-dead corpse.

"I hope there is no bad news," she remarked, after a pause.

"Oh no, none; it is a business letter merely."

She rose to leave the room with the letter in her hand—then she looked at it and thrust it in her pocket deep down so that it should not fall out.

"I wonder there is not a letter from Chester," she said, slowly, and as if every word was an effort. "There should have been one to-day I think—I—"

The words seemed to come in gasps as if every one was an effort, and with a low cry she reeled forward and fell at Lady Hester's feet insensible.

(To be Continued.)



[THE SWEET GIRL FACE LOOKING AT ME FROM THE CANVAS.]

GOD'S ACRE.

A NOVELETTE.

(COMPLETE IN THIS NUMBER.)

CHAPTER I.

MY LOVE.

I like that ancient Saxon phrase which calls
The burial ground "God's acre." It is just.
It consecrates each grave within its walls
And breathes a benison o'er the sleeping dust.

God's Acre! Surely the sweetest and most appropriate name we can bestow on the place where we give our dead into the keeping of gentle mother earth. I have always loved the name and the idea, and it is with the "Gottes Acker" of an old German city that my story has to do.

But for what befell me in that quaint, silent resting-place with its crosses and flowers, and its great crucifix uplifted with its outstretched arms in the midst of all, I should not be telling my story now—a happy man with a happy home made bright by a woman's smile.

It was "Gottes Acker" that gave me back my love when I thought I had lost her, and I never see a cemetery or pass a grave without thinking of that still summer night with the quiet moon looking down upon me and the flower-bedecked graves and gleaming monuments, and the soft rustle of the light air amongst the tall trees that made shadow and privacy for the city's most silent corner.

My life was very bright when I was a lad up till my twenty-first birthday. I had never known a care more pressing than anything amiss with my dog or my horse, or the non-fulfilment of a tailor's promise. I was unusually clever, they said. I know that study never gave me any trouble; what I wanted to learn I learned without toil, and my school and college days in con-

sequence were times of uninterrupted enjoyment.

I was handsome—my glass told me that without any flattery; rich, for I was the only child of a wealthy man, who refused me nothing, and my mother and father idolised me as parents will worship an only child.

I had the nicest rooms in the finest quad in Christ Church, and the silk gown of a gentleman commoner. I had all these things and youth and hope and—Muriel—my Muriel whom I loved as never man loved woman before, and who was to be my wife as soon as my college terms were over.

How shall I describe her—my winsome darling? Muriel—"God given!" Sweetest of all feminine names. She was the very embodiment of a heavenly gift in her purity and beauty; she was beautiful, with rippling brown hair, with golden gleams in it, and a face that many a painter would have given ten years of his life to reproduce on canvas.

But no one could ever paint her to do her justice. Artists could and did make a likeness of her features—they were regular and delicate—and catch the rare tints of her complexion and the colour of her eyes, but there their power stopped.

No one could ever put on canvas the loveliness of her sweet smile, or catch the soft flush that came and went on her delicate cheek. People looked at us as we passed them in our walks when we were together, and blessed us for our very beauty, as ignorant folks will.

My father and hers were friends and near neighbours—the estates joined, and Muriel's fortune added to my inheritance would make about as good a settlement as two young people ever began the world with.

Muriel had no mother. Mrs. Erskine had died when she was very young, and she had been brought up by an aunt who lived with her father, and who objected to the marriage with my father's son, because forsooth the money that would be mine some day had been made in commerce.

The Lady Aurelia Fitzchampion—my darling's mother had been an earl's daughter—loathed trade of any sort, or indeed anything by which a man might earn his living, with unutterable disgust, and declared that Muriel was being thrown away, and that nothing less than a duke should be the rank of her future husband.

Her brother-in-law laughed at her and said he preferred that his child should be happy in her own way, and her way was to love me, bless her! We had been children together; I had been her little champion and protector from her babyhood, and I think that everyone about us looked upon us as future man and wife from the time when we were able to toddle about hand in hand as happy and as innocent as a pair of turtle doves.

Muriel was eighteen and I was twenty when I went with her into her father's study and asked him to give her to me. The Lady Aurelia raved; but she had a way of raving, and Mr. Erskine only laughed and told her it was the match of all others he should choose for his child.

He did not mind the commerce, which my father had not entirely given up. His name never appeared, but he was known to be interested in more than one large firm and was credited with wealth as fabulous as Croesus.

The very name of Dugdale was a synonym for prosperity and wealth in the county where we resided, and people were not slow to say that Mr. Erskine had done a very wise thing in allowing his daughter to be affianced to the son of the house.

"You mustn't be in a hurry, Darcie, my boy," he said. "I cannot spare my little girl yet."

"You will spare her in a year, sir?" I said, my voice broken by the tumult at my heart. "I shall have finished at college then, and—"

"And you want to marry and settle down all at once into a regular Darby and Joan, eh? Well, well, I don't say no; but we will see; there's plenty of time, you are both very young."

I was deliciously happy. Nothing could ever

come between me and Muriel now, not even Lady Aurelia. She might say what she liked and storm as she pleased, Muriel was mine for ever till the grave closed on one of us, and no woman's tongue, however sharp—and hers, good lady, was very acid indeed—could put us asunder.

Our homes were not far from Oxford, but we parted with tears, as if I were going to the other side of the world and Muriel were never to see me again.

There was some comfort in the thought that I could run home frequently, and that Mr. Erskine could bring his daughter to see me in my scholastic splendour. He promised to do this, and I went back to begin my last academy year with Muriel's portrait next my heart and her hair woven into a watchguard and all sorts of pretty trifles to remind me of her sweet face and winning ways.

I was very proud of my happiness. There was hardly a man who knew me—and my acquaintance was very wide—that did not know that I was going to be married to the handsomest girl in Oxfordshire, and I was envied and hazed according to the disposition of my friends.

I worked hard, for I wanted to be worthy of my future position and my wife that was to be. How the sight of her dear image stirred me to fresh exertions, and exertion from me meant with my ability almost certain success in whatever I chose to undertake.

She wrote me such sweet letters too, full of loving encouragement and confidence, and I used to wear them next my heart and sleep with them under my pillow and talk to them and commit all the extravagances that a man in his first wild passion is capable of.

There came an end to it all. I suppose there comes an end to all that is bright and joyous on this mortal earth; but it is not often that it is so awful and so cruel as the end of our blissful love dreams.

It was a wet, gusty evening. The winter was setting in very stormily—already the coast was being strewn with wrecks and the hill sides with fallen trees, and the wind was howling round the old towers and whistling through the queer draughty passages and corridors of Christchurch, and I was sitting alone with sported oak finishing some work for the morrow. It was well done, and I knew it, and I was gratifying my vanity by a thorough perusal of it all, when a hasty knock came at my outer door.

I did not answer. Was not my oak sported, and was not that sign enough that I was "not at home?" But the person was persistent, and at length I called out, sharply:

"Who's there? What do you want?"

"It's me, sir, Basingford," called a voice from the outside.

Basingford was my gyp—a long-suffering person who would not have dared to come near me without good reason when he knew I wished to be alone.

"What is it?" I asked, sharply, opening the door and looking. I am bound to say, rather irate.

"It's a messenger from Mr. Dugdale. I shouldn't have disturbed you else."

"Bring him up," I replied, with a sudden sinking at my heart, "for the man's face was working as if he had received some shock. Basingford knew my father well, and had solemnly promised to take care of me when I made my first appearance at college, and he had kept his word. No girl at school was ever more carefully looked after than I was, and if Basingford was somewhat of a bore sometimes he was a very useful man indeed.

He went away without any further remark—indeed he did not seem as if he could speak very well—and returned with my father's old servant, a man who had been in his employ from the time of his marriage.

I started up at the sight of him, for his face was ashy pale and his lips were quivering.

"What is the matter, Walter?" I asked, but he only said:

"Oh, Mr. Darcie," and then put his hand over his face to hide his emotion.

I felt that there was something terrible to be

told, and I poured out a glass of wine and gave it to him.

"Drink it," I said, "and then you will be able to tell me."

The colour came back to Walter's cheeks as he sipped the fine old port, some of the best from my father's cellar, and his lips ceased to quiver.

"Now what is it?" I asked. "Is my mother ill?"

"No, sir. Thank God for that! She's as well as she can be."

"Then it is my father. Is he ill?"

"Yes—that is—"

I saw the pitying look in the kind old face and I understood it all. My father! My dear father! whom I revered and loved as only a good father can be loved, had passed away, without even a good bye or God bless you for the son he was so fond of.

"How?" I gasped, for I could hardly find words to speak. "Was it sudden?"

"Awfully."

"When?"

"About six o'clock. Come home to your mother, Mr. Darcie, for if there is any comfort under Heaven for her it will be in the sight of your face."

Basingford brought me what I wanted, and I went down with Walter to the carriage which was waiting for me. I was dazed and stupid and hardly conscious yet of the awful calamity that had befallen me. I could realise nothing but the one dreadful fact that I should see my father's face no more. He was gone, and I must be all in all to my mother from that night.

At the bottom of the stairs little groups of men were standing about, looking at me and Walter curiously, as if there was something to be remembered in the events of the evening.

"An awful thing," I heard one of them say. "Utter ruin!"

What was ruin? Had it anything to do with me? I was not ruined. I had lost my father and I had no care for anyone else's misfortunes, but there came another word through the driving rain that curdled my blood and made me feel as if I were turning to stone.

"Suicide!"

It seemed to hiss through the air, though the man who had spoken had said it softly enough. I turned sharply to Walter and gripped his arm.

"Is THAT it?" I asked, and he bowed his head in very shame and sorrow for the master he had loved so well, and whispered:

"Yes."

CHAPTER II.

MY SORROW.

This is truth the poet sings,
That a sorrow's crown of sorrows is remembering
happier things.

I COULD not ask Walter how—I could not speak, the horror of what I had heard seemed to weigh me down and strike me dumb, and I got into the carriage that he had brought for me without another word.

I felt stunned and stupid; it was all some horrible nightmare surely—this sudden summons, this hurried journey through the howling wind and beating rain. I was ill—feverish, and I should wake presently in my own bed with Basingford ministering to me in his handy, womanish way.

Alas! it was all too true, we were driving through the familiar lodge gates of my father's place, and the old woman who kept the lodge, one of his special protégées, was standing there in the rain with her apron to her eyes as we passed. She was mourning for her master, my dead father, and I knew now that I was awake and that all Walter had told me was true.

"Rouse up, Mr. Darcie," Walter said, seeing my white, set face. "For Heaven's sake, for your mother's sake, sir, try and be yourself."

"Yes," I said, mechanically, "I will; but it is so sudden, Walter, so awful."

I was realising it now as we came in sight of

the house, all dark and gloomy, somehow looking as if the seal of misfortune and ruin was set upon it already.

The man I had heard speak at the college gate had said "ruin," and I could guess only too well what the tragedy that had taken my father away from us must perforce mean. I tried not to think of it, I tried to make myself believe that some illness or aberration of intellect had overtaken him, and that when his affairs came to be looked into they would be all right.

I knew better all the time, and was quite certain that he had gone away from a world that he could not face. I knew it all soon enough.

I stumbled as I entered, giddy with my great pain. I should have been glad if I could have fainted like a woman, and lost the sense of my keen anguish in merciful insensibility. Life had been so sweet to me hitherto, the world so bright, that this calamity came upon me with greater force than if I had been accustomed to the ups and downs of every-day life. I conquered the weakness in a moment and drew Walter into the dining-room.

"Tell me everything," I said, "how it happened and all about it, before I go to my mother."

I should be better able to help and comfort her I thought if there was nothing left for me to learn—it would spare her too to have nothing to tell me.

"What caused it?" I asked. "Had anything happened to worry him?"

For answer Walter took up a paper that was lying on the table. I had not seen an evening paper before I left, I had been busy, and I was never a very eager newspaper reader. It contained the news of a sudden panic in the commercial world caused by the failure of one of the most important banks in London. There was no need to tell me any more. My dead father had been one of the principal partners, though his name did not appear.

"It was all along of that, sir," Walter said. "I've seen something coming these three or four weeks past, but it was none of my business to speak. Letters have come pretty thick, and this morning a messenger brought this; I made so bold as to hide it, for I thought it would not do for it to be seen. I picked it up in my master's room after—after—"

His voice broke, and he put a letter into my hand that was explanation enough of all that had come to pass. It had no signature or date, but it counselled my father to fly, all hope was over, it said, and all concerned were taking care of themselves.

I understood it, though it was very little business that ever came in my way, and I thrust it into my pocket out of sight.

"I was in the room with my poor master when it came," Walter went on, "and I saw the look that came into his face when he read it. I knew it was trouble, and I made so bold as to ask him. 'Yes, it's trouble, Walter,' he said, 'great trouble, but it will soon be over, my man, very soon.' I didn't understand him, I wish I had, and I went away—there was something for me to do elsewhere—and I never saw him again alive."

"Where did it happen? Where were you then?" I asked. "Could no one have prevented it?"

"No one knew it, sir," Walter replied, "no one heard a sound till it was getting dark, and my mistress wanted him for something. I heard her go upstairs, and I was just beginning to wonder my master's bell had not rung for me as usual, when I heard her scream. The door was locked, but—"

He paused for a moment. He had been the first to reach my mother's side and had seen and understood what had frightened her.

"There was no need to tell her anything, sir," he said, shivering, "the story of what had happened inside was creeping out from under the door in a thin red streak. We took her away, poor lady, and broke the door open. I sent for Mr. Erskine, sir, and saw to my mistress

—she has been well cared for—and then I set off to fetch you.”

I understood all better in that short narrative than in a volume of useless words, and I wrung Walter's hand in real gratitude.

“You have acted like a friend, Walter,” I said. “I shall not forget it. Now tell them I am here and take me to my mother.”

There were plenty of sympathising and curious people in the house, my Muriel's father amongst them, and he greeted me with a stiffness that I thought then was the awkwardness of sorrow. I did not understand the world so well then as I do now.

The clergyman of the parish was there too, and one or two female friends of my mother's. I greeted them all in a dazed, mechanical sort of way, I was too much stunned for any common-places, but somehow I felt there was pity mixed with their kindness, and I resented it—I hardly knew why.

They took me to my mother's darkened room and left us together. Till I saw her I hardly realised the extent of our misfortune. She was lying pale and cold, more like a statue than a living, breathing woman. She smiled faintly at me when I kissed her cold face.

“They have told you, my boy?” she asked.

“Yes, mother, all.”

“All?”

“I hope so. Don't talk about it, mother, dear,” I said, struggling with my own grief that I might minister to hers. “I am here to do all that can be done and to comfort you if I can.”

“Ah, Darcie—ah, my boy,” and the welcome tears burst forth with her words, “you don't know, I see you don't. There is more than our loss—there are dishonour and degradation. My poor darling could not face it, and he died.”

I begged her not to speak of it, to leave it till she was better; but she would not, I had better know all now she said, and perhaps she was right.

“You will have hard work to do, Darcie, my boy,” she said, with a sad, sweet smile, “and the night cometh in which no man can work.”

I did not understand her then. I do now. She knew that the blow which had fallen on her was the last. Her life was going with the disgrace and shame that had come upon her and me through him who lay there dead by his own hand.

The story of our ruin has nothing to do with my tale except in an indirect way. I heard it all from my mother while I sat by her bedside.

Speculation had done it all, and for months we had been living on nothing, but my father's waning reputation. His money and hers and all that he had put away with such loving pride for me had gone in the madness which the demon of speculation rouses in men's minds. I had known nothing. My mother had kept all her griefs and anxieties to herself, and had not worried me with any of her doubts and fears, and now they had killed her.

I could see it in her wasted face and her unnatural calmness. The doctor said he would rather see the most frantic grief than this stony composure. Only once had the tears come, and that was when she first spoke to me.

The tale of my father's death and the execrations heaped on his head are well remembered I daresay. There were others on whom the blame should have fallen equally, but they had been more business-like in their proceedings—were nowhere to be found when the crash came, and my father's fortune that was looked to to meet liabilities was found to have no more foundation than a child's house of cards. What there was they were welcome to take, but it was nothing. The very house we lived in, the clothes we wore, were not our own, and my mother and I turned our backs on our old home destitute.

I never thought of Muriel during these days of horror, except as my darling whom I should clasp again to my heart when all the sad excitement was over. She could not come to me. Our house was no place for her till the dread presence was removed and we were at peace

again. But she wrote to me—a little loving, pitiful note—telling me how sorry she was for me, and how she wished she could be with me and comfort me.

The very sight of her handwriting did that. It was comfort to know that she was near. Other notes came—notably one from the Lady Aurelia, in which she expressed her sympathy with my mother and myself, and regretted that her delicate health would prevent her from expressing her condolences in person. Her delicate health! She was as robust as a ploughboy. It was her wicked pride and the knowledge of our poverty.

Our neighbours came to the funeral, and when it was over and my poor mother safe in her own room I spoke to Mr. Erskine. I knew the worst now, and that I had nothing, even the clothes that I wore could scarcely be called my own, for they were paid for with money that should have gone into the pockets of the helpless creditors of the bank.

There were disgrace and dishonour as well as sorrow to face, but I could live them down. Muriel was mine—my own—they had given her to me, and she would not change whatever came about. Ah! I was young and had no knowledge of the world. Circumstances had changed her father told me; we must forget our youthful folly and be very thankful that we had bound ourselves by no nearer tie before the catastrophe which had broken my life and made me a beggar.

I was thunderstruck, for I had not thought of such an ending to my happiness, and I begged to see Muriel and hear from her own lips that we must meet no more. The boon I craved for was denied me.

“Miss Erskine” had left home for some time with her aunt, Lady Aurelia. I was told they thought it better that we should not meet again. My heart was full of bitterness as I turned away from the house. The world was very hard and bleak.

But my darling was not false to me or unkind of what I was suffering. In spite of her aunt she managed to send me a letter telling me that nothing should make her unfaithful to me. She could not do as she pleased now, but she would wait, and never, never marry anyone else or love anyone else as long as she lived.

The blow that made me fatherless made me motherless as well. The worry and distress that had preceded the final event, and which had been so skilfully concealed, had done their work, and my mother never held up her head again. She died with little or no suffering—her only grief being that she was leaving me to the mercy of the world.

A hard, cold world it was too, but I found my place. I was not a bad artist, and I managed to obtain employment with a man who had been my father's most intimate friend. He was a great artist, and his portrait of my father had been exhibited and bepraised till it was worth the cheque given for it as an advertisement. Mr. Treloar remembered this in my time of need and held out a helping hand to me.

He was kind and considerate and let me study as well as work, and in his studio I laid the foundation of the art education that has placed me where I am.

CHAPTER III.

MY DESPAIR.

And nothing can we call our own but death
And that small model of the barren earth
Which serves as paste and cover to our bones.

I WORKED on with Mr. Treloar for two years, and in all that time I scarcely ever heard a word of Muriel. She did not seem to be going into society much. She was presented the same year in which her father promised her to me for my wife and made a great sensation by her beauty and grace. But she was mentioned no more in any of the frivolous society papers that are so fond of prying into the most secret matters and making public the smallest things relative to persons of note.

I hardly ever heard her name, and it never passed my lips.

She was the daughter of a wealthy, prosperous man, one whose speculations had all been successful and whose name was untainted by any dishonour. I was a nobody, with a disgraced name and an empty pocket. I was not for her. Perhaps they had succeeded in making her forget me. If it could be done Lady Aurelia would do it.

It was fully a year before I even heard her name mentioned, and then Mr. Treloar said to me one day:

“I have a job for you, Dugdale.”

“What is it?” I asked.

“It is to renovate a picture that has been accidentally damaged. Mind, I am trusting you with a very particular job—the picture can never be replaced.”

“The original is dead then?”

“Not dead, but she will never look like that again.”

The picture was in the studio he told me. It arrived since I left on the previous evening, and I repaired thither to see the sweet girl-face of my darling looking at me from the canvas.

I must have given a little cry, wrung from my heart by the stab of sudden memory, for Mr. Treloar laid his hand on my shoulder with a kindly touch.

“Forgive me, my boy,” he said. “I had forgotten. You shall not do that work.”

“Ah, yes, let me,” I said. “It is something to look at her even only on the senseless canvas. But why is she not like that now? It is not two years since it was taken.”

“People change in two years,” the artist said.

“Miss Erskine looks no more like that picture now than a faded, broken flower looks like a fresh one growing in the garden. There is trouble coming in that house, Mr. Dugdale.”

“What sort of trouble?” I asked, eagerly, “and where are they?”

“I cannot answer your last question. They are travelling somewhere, notoriously (for Lady Aurelia never does anything by halves), trying to capture a Russian prince, who is smitten with Miss Erskine's beauty. To your first question I can only say that it is matter of common gossip that Mr. Erskine is heavily involved, and that unless he can extricate himself from his difficulties there will be a pretty considerable smash some day soon.”

I thought of Muriel's loving little letter lying on my breast as I worked at her picture, and I knew that of her own free will she would marry no prince, Russian or otherwise. But the knowledge brought her no nearer to me.

I almost wished that the difficulties would come and overwhelm Mr. Erskine. Then, perhaps, she might be considered my equal, and no one would say us nay.

The picture was finished and sent back to the London house. The mischief had been the butler's doing, and it gave me an excuse for calling and seeing the man about it.

From him I learned many things about my lost darling. He was a new servant and he had no idea I was anything more than Mr. Treloar's servant, and he gossiped freely enough about his employers.

They were abroad, I learned. Lady Aurelia, more despotic than ever, and Muriel, my darling, fading away as the time went on.

“She's dying, sir, if ever young woman was,” he said. “She's not a bit like that picture now. I haven't seen much of her, not having been with the family long. But she's a sweet young lady, and it goes to my heart to see her wasting day by day like. They want her to marry a gentleman that has been here a great deal, but it's to her grave they'll take her, I'm thinking, when the time comes—not to the church.”

I asked him what was the matter with her, but he could not tell me. He knew nothing of the blight that had come upon our lives, and he only saw a sick girl in my poor, harassed darling. He could not tell me where they were any more than Mr. Treloar. They travelled constantly, he said; the doctors had ordered change for Miss Erskine, and Lady Aurelia

seldom stopped more than a month in any one place.

"I can get the address if you want to write to them, sir," he said.

But I said no. What could I do? I could not tell my darling that I could give her the position she was entitled to, and I did not know whether she was still my own Muriel. My heart told me she was, but I had only my poverty to offer her; better she should forget me altogether since I could give her nothing but the knowledge of my sorrow and misery.

I was doing reasonably well. My wants were few, and I had saved money since I had been with Mr. Treloar—not much, but enough to make me feel independent of the world for a few weeks, that was all. I was a simple workman, an art hack—out of her world altogether.

Hearing of her again made me very restless and unsettled, and I think Mr. Treloar guessed the cause.

"You shall have a change, Dugdale," he said to me one morning after I had seen the name of Erskine in the papers for the first time.

It was only a tiny paragraph, stating that the extreme delicacy of Miss Erskine's health made the postponement of her marriage with prince something or other necessary. I did not note the man's name. It did not matter to me who he was. He would stand between me and my darling, and I felt as if I should like to find him and kill him. There was nothing to tell me where she was. What did it signify to me? I was not in her life now.

The change was from England, with its bustle and driving and ever-hurrying life, to quaint, art-shadowed Munich, with its memories of the past and glories of the present.

My master had a commission to paint some of the scenery of the Bavarian Alps, and as much for my sake, I believe, as his own he made Munich his head-quarters.

I had travelled in my student days when money was plentiful, and I could satisfy a boyish whim for Paris or Brussels, or any place where there were gaiety and amusement, but I had never seen the Bavarian capital nor the queer, quaint old towns of southern Germany.

He reckoned on the novelty helping to dispel my gloom, and he was partially right; to some extent it did. He was an observant man, and though he had hardly said half a dozen words to me about the sorrow that was darkening my life he knew of it, and did what man could to make it lighter for me.

I did not forget Muriel in the grand world that opened for me in Munich. I somehow wove her image into all the little daily events of my life. I lived in a world of my own—a world of shadows and dreams perhaps, but they were all Muriel.

Her face fitted beside me through all the places where the lovers of art seemed to congregate most, and her voice seemed to whisper in my ear as I mused before some grand work of bygone masters.

It was an unhealthy life, I daresay, but I was happier than I had been since I laid my mother in her grave, and my dreams began to take life and grow under my fingers on the canvas till Mr. Treloar began to say that I should make my mark in the art world yet.

I lived very much alone there. He found congenial society, not very fashionable people, but men of his own stamp—protégés of the crazy king, who will have all that is best and loveliest gathered together that he may enjoy them by himself—musicians, poets, painters, sculptors—and my indulgent master was happy in their society, with a happiness that the common world could not understand.

I lived in a tall house in a little street off the Frauen Kirche Platz, within sight of the time-worn towers so Eastern in their queer architecture, and I could sit at my window and see the storks that made their habitations on the chimneys of my neighbours' houses.

I had an odd little room with a polished floor and a tall stove, that by no means compensated for the want of a bright English fire, and I was within five minutes' walk of the stately Maximilian

Strasse, with its splendid buildings and shops and its shady trees.

I was almost within hearing of the rushing Isar, on whose banks I was never tired of strolling, and the roar of whose waters I learned to love as if I were Bavarian born.

Surely no river ever tore through its channels in such a hurry as that turbulent, unnavigable stream, with its white-crested waves and its ceaseless tumult of sound. It fascinated me, and many a time I have turned from the beauties of the art world to loiter and listen to its dashing waters.

There was another place in the old city that had a mighty fascination for me, and that was the cemetery, the "Gottes Acker," where the Munich dead reposed. There is nothing special in the arrangement of the ground; both old and new burying grounds are flat and laid out with but little attention to the picturesque. The Germans are not gifted in the art of landscape making; they have no turf nor sufficient water to make it grow if they had it.

There is no notion there of the soft velvet green produced by continual cutting and watering, and their cemeteries, though decorated and flower-beset, are not the green resting-places we are accustomed to in England.

I think the quaint tombs and the loving decorations and inscriptions took my fancy, anyway I spent a good deal of time there and made many sketches. I have all sorts of jottings by me now made in that silent place: Groups of awe-struck peasants looking about with timid reverence and many an obeisance to the great crucifix in the middle of the place, mourners weeping over their dead, arrivals at the mortuary, nay the very inside of that stopping-place on the road to the grave, which was by no means gloomy or redolent of mortality's decay.

The dead that were brought there were decked with flowers and gaily dressed, and there was always such an odd feeling of the unreality of it all that I used to stand and look in through the uncurtained windows, half expecting some of them to wake.

One day—how long ago it seems now, and yet it is but a few years—I went there rather late in the evening. Mr. Treloar was away that day sketching in the mountains and did not want me. His absence would extend over three or four days, and I was free to follow my own devices.

There had been a great fête, the festival of some dead-and-gone celebrity, and all Munich had turned out to the Englischer Garten—so called, I suppose, because it is like nothing English—to see and be seen.

I strolled away with an acquaintance I had made, who lived in the vicinity of the Gartner Platz, and from his house I went still farther and reached the gate of the cemetery.

I was asked by the gatekeeper if I was going in, and when I said yes he reminded me that it was nearly the time for closing. I nodded and stood watching while a hearse drove up with a body for the mortuary. It was a woman—a young girl, by the white dress and the lace veil—a betrothed bride perhaps, from her costume.

I saw them take her in to the farthest end of the room, where there was a place vacant, and then I turned away and strolled off through the graves.

I must have forgotten the time, or the men have gone away earlier than usual, for when I roused from a reverie into which I had fallen it was to find the tall gates locked and myself a prisoner with the dead.

CHAPTER IV.

MY JOY.

And there is e'en a happiness
Which makes the heart afraid.

The situation was uncomfortable, but not specially alarming. I had no superstitious fears; no one of these quiet dead people would have any message for me that would bring them out of their graves, but for all that there was some-

thing eerie and strange in the feeling that I was the only living thing amongst all these mementoes of perishable mortality.

I should find someone to let me out I thought as I hastily made my way to the great iron gates, outside which some of the people employed lived. I did not know that the houses were temporarily empty. Repairs were being attended to, and the inhabitants had been moved for a while to some cottages on the other side of the cemetery.

The man whose duty it was to watch the mortuary where the unburied dead lay amongst the flowers and crosses had taken advantage of there being no one there to report on his proceedings to absent himself and go to the merry-making which was still going on all over Munich.

It was odd to be there alone, with all these gleaming gravestones and monumental crosses, and the scent of flowers and the waving of trees and the shadows cast here and there by the bright moonlight looked weird and black. It was a glorious night, though just a little cold, and I congratulated myself on having my cloak with me. It was an odd garment—a large unfashionable thing that I had picked up cheap in the neighbourhood of Leicester Square, and in which Mr. Treloar was wont to say I looked like a Brigand Chief.

I had found it very useful, and I had felt shivery and chilly this evening, for the weather was just changing, and in another week or two the nights would be cold. I wrapped it round me now and sat down listening to the faint sounds of music which penetrated even there from some of the bands that seemed to be everywhere. I laughed to myself at the thought of how frightened the gatekeeper would be if he came and found me there amongst the graves, and I half resolved to frighten him for his carelessness in leaving his post.

But he did not come, and the night wore on and I was still alone. I walked twice to the gate, but there was no sign of life; the fête had taken away everyone from that dreary quarter—for the neighbourhood was dreariness itself, though "Gottes Acker" was bright and cheerful enough. I stood by the silent mortuary for a minute the second time I reached the gate, for the little building is close to the entrance, and then with a sudden impulse tried the door.

It yielded to my touch. The holiday had upset everything, that was certain. The custodian had gone and left it unlocked. I looked in as I had often done before—calm death has no terrors for me, and I had made more than one sketch for sorrowing friends of their loved ones as they lay in this halfway house of their journey. I had never seen it as I saw it now, with the moonlight flooding every corner of it and the calm faces of the dead looking up into its beams with sightless eyes.

There was not one vacant place—death had been busy during the last few days, and every bier in the two rows was occupied. Old and young, rich and poor—there they lay. An aged woman with her white hair brushed smooth, and soft lace round her head, and withered hands meekly grasping the crucifix that lay flower-entwined on her bosom. Then a little child, a bright, happy-faced lad, who seemed asleep as he lay; then a man, with a hard, stern face, who looked as if he had fought out the fight with death to the very last. Some were already covered up for burial on the morrow; some had their faces shaded, but the others seemed to be looking at me as I walked softly amongst them.

I was taking in every detail of the scene with an artist's eye, and dreamily thinking of a picture that I could make of this moonlit place, when I heard my name called close to me! The voice was broken and low, but it was distinct, and with the sound came what I had never felt before in the presence of death—terror! In one instant I was transformed from a somewhat careless spectator into a thing of abject fear—such fear as I hope does not often fall to the lot of man to endure.

The silent forms about me seemed to be suddenly endowed with life; every one of them seemed to look at me with wide-open eyes and

to beckon me with cold fingers to come nearer. I tried to tell myself it was fancy, that my over-excited imagination had conjured up the sound. I would go, I would get out into the air; but my feet refused their office and I could not stir, and again from behind me came the little cry:

"Darcie!"

I turned with a mighty effort, and saw HER, my Muriel, sitting up on her bier and looking at me!

The sight broke the spell and brought me back to myself. In a moment I was by the side of the figure, and I was not mistaken—it was Muriel, white and cold, but alive; it was she I had seen the men bring in before the gates were shut, and Heaven in its infinite mercy had allowed me to be there to help her!

She did not know me. She looked at me with an unrecognising glance when I took her in my arms; but she was alive; there had been some horrible mistake in the sorrow that had sent her there. I lifted her down, but she could not stand, and throwing aside the veil and loose drapery in which she was enveloped, I muffled her in my cloak and carried her to the door. Her white dress was entirely concealed, and a queer impulse made me arrange the coverings and wreaths where she had lain straight and in order.

I did not know what to do. I was afraid she might die in my arms of the exposure and fright if she came to herself, but, alas, her mind was far away. Her lips moved now and then and I could catch some of her indistinct mutterings as I sat there holding her to my heart and praying for help to come that I might get her home.

"I'm not mad, Aunt Aurelia," she said. "It is not madness to love Darcie. I shall never love anyone else."

And then she looked at me in sudden fright and struggled in my grasp.

"Are you come to take me to the madhouse?" she asked—"where they are going to keep me till I marry him?"

And then she writhed and moaned so that I could hardly hold her. If I could only get her out, if only those high gates would open, I would take her where she would be safe. There must have been terrible cruelty somewhere. Lady Aurelia was capable of anything to gain her own ends, and had driven my darling to her grave. I felt sure of that.

I understood it all afterwards. I came to know for a certainty that Muriel had been most cruelly treated by the stately dame who had tried to force her into a marriage with the Russian. Mr. Erskine had fallen into difficulties, and his sister-in-law had taken possession of Muriel and promised him that his daughter's beauty should procure him help in the shape of a rich son-in-law.

She found the weak girl more than a match for her. Muriel was faithful to me in spite of all her aunt asserted to the contrary; she would be faithful to me all her life; she loathed the foreign rone whose title Lady Aurelia was so anxious for her to share, and she was degraded beyond measure at the unblushing pursuit of him which her aunt insisted on.

Her father was not with them or things might have been better for her, and at length she gave way in the struggle. There would be no marriage for her in this world, the doctors said, and at last fever laid her low and she died. At least they deemed her dead, and laid her where the hand of Heaven surely sent me to save her.

I knew nothing of all this as I sat with her in my arms, wondering if it were not all a dream. I had not heard of her being in Munich, had had no idea of where she was till her voice sounded in my ear amongst the corpses in the mortuary.

At last help came. One of the gate keepers, not the one who had locked me in, but another, very drunk, made his appearance outside and clung to the bars, unsteadily looking at me.

He was evidently very much frightened, and I angrily bade him open the gate. I told him he had locked my sister and myself in, and that she was so frightened that she had fainted away. There was nothing in the black form I

was holding to excite his suspicion, and he fumbled with the lock till he had opened the heavy gates.

"Are there any cabs about?" I asked. "It will be well if the fright does not kill my sister. The gate was locked fully half an hour too soon."

"It was the fête," he muttered, and intimating that there was a cab round the corner, he stumbled off to see if there were any more people in the same predicament as myself. He did not look into the mortuary, I had closed the door carefully after me, hoping that I might be able to execute a plan which had formed itself in my mind for Muriel's escape.

I would not take her to her aunt—indeed, I did not know where to find her. But I would go to my friend in the Reichenbach Strasse and ask him and his mother to help me.

I did find a cab, with a driver in the same condition as the cemetery official, and our passage through the streets was not made without some difficulty.

I had to put "my sister" inside the vehicle, helpless as she was, and assist the bemused coachman to guide his horse. I feared pursuit, dreaded a hue and cry, and I was by no means sure that the Frau Dahlweiner would take me in at such an hour.

I was agreeably disappointed. We reached the tall old house without mishap, and my very first ring brought down my friend Ludwig.

"We have had no sleep," he said, "the city is mad to-night through the fête."

Of course he would help me, he was good nature itself, and his mother would do what she could. They had a spare room, her lodger had only left two days ago.

I told Ludwig that any expense would be amply repaid, and we got Muriel upstairs and dismissed the driver, who forthwith nearly drove into the Isar, and was finally landed in prison with next to no recollection of where he had been or what he had done throughout the night.

I told my story to Ludwig and his mother, the simple truth was the best, and bound them to secrecy till I should communicate directly with Mr. Erskine.

They managed everything. Muriel was their lodger, there were plenty of girls studying in Munich and living with respectable people while they pursued their studies, and the doctor who was fetched had no idea who his patient really was.

She was very ill, poor darling, she only roused to rave in delirium and beg her aunt to have mercy on her and kill her rather than let her marry the Russian grandee.

She revealed unconsciously a tale of suffering and tyranny that made my blood boil with indignation when I heard it. Lady Aurelia should never have her again to ill-treat and abuse. And so by a chapter of lucky accidents it came about that while all Munich was in a ferment over the strange robbery of the mortuary and search was being made everywhere for the corpse of the young English girl that had been stolen, my darling was being tended back to life by loving hands and kind hearts in the little attic in the Reichenbach Strasse.

Mr. Treloar helped me. I went to him with my story first, and he contrived to find Mr. Erskine for me as soon as he arrived in Munich, which he did post haste on hearing of his daughter's death.

His grief and indignation were terrible when he was told of what had happened, and that her corpse had been stolen, doubtless for medical purposes. No one thought of looking for her alive, poor darling, thanks to the drunkenness of the fête night.

Mr. Erskine was very much changed, his face bore traces of anxiety and grief, and he greeted me with gentleness and no trace of the severity with which he had last spoken to me.

"Treloar tells me you can say something about this horrible affair," he said. "My poor child, could she not be allowed to rest in her coffin even?"

"Has he left it for me to tell, sir?" I asked.

"Yes."

"Then she is safe, Mr. Erskine."

"Safe! Where? How?"

I could hardly make him believe she was not dead, and when he did understand it he burst into tears of grief and joy. I told him how it all came about and what I had done, and we went together to my friend's house.

Muriel was not to die, though she was battling hard for her life, and her father understood when he heard my name continually from her lips what her sufferings must have been.

All this is years past now, and Muriel is my darling wife, and we are prosperous and happy beyond measure. Mr. Erskine is not as rich as when I asked him first for Muriel's hand, but he has recovered his position in a great measure, and Lady Aurelia rules his house no more.

The Russian prince to whom she proposed to sacrifice Muriel turned out to be burdened with a wife already, who pursued him to Paris and caused a scandal, which made him glad to retire to his own country and hide his head for a time.

The world has dealt very gently with me. I have made my mark as a painter, and I can give my wife a home replete with comfort if not as stately as the house whose mistress I once hoped she would be.

Our children are as bonny as their beautiful mother, and serve me as models for all sorts of pretty pictures. They have art instincts already, and love nothing so well as rummaging my portfolios and making stories for themselves out of the many scraps they find there.

My second Muriel, a little fair-haired likeness of her mother, opines gravely that "papa must be very fond of churchyards," she cannot understand yet why among my multitude of scraps there are so many sketches of "God's Acre."

THE DOUBLE HOUSE.

A SHORT STORY.

(COMPLETE IN THIS NUMBER.)

THE double house was not a double house in the ordinary sense of the word, for the two divisions had been planned at different times and built without any regard to harmonious union; consequently, although the older part was low-ceiled, cottage-like and unpretentious, the newer overtopped it by a story and assumed corresponding airs of distinction.

The double house stood upon a hillside in New England and looked out over the busy town of Fairweather across a shining perspective of river.

It had kept solitary state in its great garden for years until Fairweather, suddenly awaking to a sense of neglected possibilities, began to send up stacks of black chimneys to resound with the noise of grinding and to stretch out arms on all sides, like an exaggerated polypus, and new streets even crept across the river, threatening to reach and embrace the double house itself at no very distant epoch.

It was while Fairweather was in this transition state between town and city that Margaret Ralston came to live there with her mother and little sister, and the three set up their simple household gods in the cottage part of the double house. The stater portion had been already occupied for some time by a single gentleman and his servants.

"This place would be just perfection but for one thing," said Margaret to her mother.

The two were sitting in a little porch which overlooked the river and the town, and the summer day was closing. Far off in a cleft between the hills the sun had just gone down, leaving the sky and the river golden with lingering reflections; the town, embosomed in trees, looked at that distance as if it too had abandoned itself to the spirit of repose.

Margaret's eyes, lingering over this picture, had been dreamy with calm content, but on a

sudden a spark kindled in their dark depths. Her glance had fallen by chance upon two figures visible at a little distance—the figures of a man and a dog, sauntering down towards the river; the odour of cigar smoke too was in the air.

Margaret's brows contracted; Margaret's lips unclosed to utter the words which stand written above. There was a slight dash of asperity in her tone.

"What do you object to, dear—the mills and the smoke?" Mrs. Ralston asked, turning a pair of languid eyelids slightly in her daughter's direction.

"Oh, no, mamma. We can't hear the noise of the mills, and the smoke becomes picturesque at this distance; I like to see them both; I like to think of work and the results of work. I have no fault to find with the town—only with the house. I wish somebody else lived in the other half. Don't you see Mr. Elmering, yonder, with that great dog of his following at his heels, like a familiar spirit? I was looking at him."

"Well, you know, Margaret, we couldn't get another place as pretty, and quiet, and homelike as this is for the money; and there are drawbacks everywhere."

"True enough, mamma; isn't life itself one grand drawback to lone women like us? But it does seem as if we might have had some more comfortable crosses to carry with this house than Mr. Elmering; for instance, a leaky roof, a knocking and groaning ghost, a neighbour with a propensity to borrow and never return," said Margaret, making a whimsical little grimace, which turned into a smile.

"I don't see why you dislike the man so much; he has never troubled us."

"He does trouble me, continually. I never see him that I don't feel painfully aware of having been weighed in the balance and found wanting; besides, those black looks of his will bring us bad luck yet, I'm certain. There! he is out of sight; I am somebody again."

"I really can't imagine what you mean, Margaret."

Margaret only laughed and settled herself more comfortably in her chair. She was a bright, dark, energetic-looking girl, whom plenty of people were ready to pronounce beautiful, though the charm of her face lay rather in its mobility and power of expression than in any decided grace of colouring or outline. She interested you in spite of yourself; you could not help liking to look at and be near her; where Margaret was something fresh and sweet and genuine was.

She was the greatest possible contrast to her mother: a pale woman with a tired air, out of whose character fate had as it were, by dint of much ill-usage, beaten all the starch and left it a limp thing to be shaken this way and that, as circumstances pleased. Margaret had long been the real head of the small household.

The gentleman strolling down towards the river had seen, without seeming to see, the two ladies seated in the little porch; and was at that moment thinking of them—not very flatteringly.

"Well, well," he said to himself, "if one woman was enough to destroy the original Paradise, I need not be surprised at the effect upon mine of a whole family of petticoats! Confound it! why need an affliction have taken precisely that shape?"

In justice to him, Mr. Elmering was writing a book and wanted to be quiet. In a place where nobody knew him and people were too busy to be curious, he flattered himself that he had attained the perfection of his wishes; prematurely: for the Ralstons came.

The elder lady was certainly inoffensive; but the young lady and little girl! Margaret played and sang, taught her sister music, and compelled Fanny to practise two hours a day, with a relentlessness that seemed to their neighbour simply inhuman. There were also daily lessons in elocution, and the Ralstons had a great many friends in Fairweather who were always coming to see them, and occasioning so much talk and

laughter and additional music that the unfortunate man who was trying to embody his ideas began to think the ancients had never shown their good taste more plainly than by consecrating altars to the genius of silence.

Mr. Elmering could not very well sue his neighbours on such grounds, and he did not care to move away; he merely fled from the commodious and sunny front-chamber to a corner room, much given to cobwebs and damp, and revealing through its one window a perspective of potato-patches and unfinished buildings.

Nor did he incline the more towards the Ralstons when he heard that Margaret was "the Miss Ralston so well known for her gift of reading and recitation." He deprecated any kind of career for women which brought them before a crowd for miscellaneous criticism; and for the women themselves who coveted such careers he had small charity. Margaret was probably a disagreeable creature, eaten up with vanity and love of notoriety; and as he carefully avoided all communication with the Ralston household he had no opportunity of correcting his ideal portrait by a comparison with the original.

This unsocial behaviour was, certainly, no way to recommend himself to the good graces of a family of ladies. But Margaret had a grievance of her own. Two or three years before some over-officious friend had called her attention to a magazine article, reflecting severely, not to say savagely, upon some modern theories of womanly independence.

It contained a great deal of truth and a great deal of injustice, and was far too cleverly written to laugh at. The injustice hurt Margaret more than the truth consoled her. She would have liked to challenge the author's arguments with some chapters out of her own experience and out of other lives she knew of.

She took pains to ascertain his name, and presently in the course of events she found herself living under the same roof with him.

When it became apparent that Mr. Elmering did not intend to notice his neighbours Margaret took this loftiness to herself as a personal slight.

"For we are not living in an hotel, or in a French flat, but here in this isolated house," thought Margaret, with some bitterness. "He knows I am one of the women he finds fault with and considers me strong-minded and horrible, I suppose. I should like to ask him what he would have had me do! I am sure I never wanted to appear in public, but one can't stand upon ceremony for ever in a world where one is liable to starve to death. I am not sorry he has turned out to be such a disagreeable person, not that his opinion of me would have mattered in any case. I don't care what it is."

So the partition between the two halves of the double house, though only the thinnest of lath and plaster, might as well have been impenetrable granite for all the difference it would have made to either of the households it separated. The very servants declined to know each other.

Mr. Elmering's Paul and Mary Ann, being on the aristocratic side of the house, looked down with scorn on the modest Kate in Mrs. Ralston's kitchen, and not to be behindhand with them Kate lost no opportunity of disparaging those "fine city servants," and of hinting darkly that as likely as not their master would be found murdered in his bed some morning.

What was worse, nobody expected a change in this condition of things, for where neither party is willing to conciliate, or be conciliated, the way to an amicable understanding is tolerably well blocked. But there is a factor potent in human affairs called accident.

Long after Mr. Elmering had disappeared from sight that evening Margaret and her mother remained sitting on the porch, talking softly together, or silently watching the light fading out of the sky.

A sound of trampling and panting and a rush of feet on the steps startled them both, and the great black head of Mr. Elmering's dog was

thrust up between them, almost at Margaret's elbow.

"That dreadful dog!" cried Mrs. Ralston, deserting her place with a small shriek of dismay and darting into the house.

Margaret rose, too, but with lips growing white. Her glance had passed over the dog, had seen his master following behind, hatless and coatless, and discerned what burden he carried in his arms. She hurried out to meet him, but she could not speak; she could only look up mutely into his face.

"Don't be frightened; the child is safe," said Mr. Elmering, answering the terror in Margaret's eyes. "She has had a great shock; she is very weak yet—that is all. She should not be allowed to wander out alone, Miss Ralston. The river is too near. I wonder you permit it."

He looked at Margaret reproachfully. Doubtless a woman who preferred cojuring public admiration to practising private duty needed to be sharply admonished, now and then, and if Fanny had been in great danger it was most probably all Margaret's fault.

"She has been forbidden to go to the river alone. I thought she was upstairs," Margaret said, simply, receiving the dripping child into her own arms. She did not, at the moment, observe that she was being scolded. "Fanny, Fanny, how could you be so naughty? Mamma will be so frightened. Oh! Mr. Elmering, I don't know how to thank you, but I shall never forget—"

Margaret's eyes uplifted, and shining with tears, made the broken words eloquent.

"My dog deserves the chief credit," said Mr. Elmering. He was touched in spite of himself. "A plunge in the water hurts nobody in July. Your little sister will be herself again in the morning, ready for another venture, if you don't watch her well."

"I don't think she will disobey me again," said Margaret. "And pray take care of yourself, Mr. Elmering. You are very wet. Come, Fanny, you reckless little creature, how could you? What if we had lost you, you wicked, unlucky, precious, precious darling?"

And kissing and scolding Fanny, whom her fright had brought to a state of repentance that reproaches could scarcely heighten, Margaret led her into the house. Mr. Elmering entered his own door. She was a prettier girl than he had thought—that over-independent Miss Ralston, and with more of the household light than the stage meteor in her appearance; he would really like to know something more of her, thought Mr. Elmering, inconsistently enough.

But he was "not at home" when the two ladies from the other side of the house called next day. So Mrs. Ralston sent him a note, rather incoherent, but full of gratitude, and received later a polite message inquiring for Fanny.

Mr. Elmering's entrenchments of reserve appeared impregnable. Mrs. Ralston conjectured that he was a hero of the Jarndyce type—too sensitive to bear any allusion to the service he had done them, but Margaret thought:

"He doesn't want to have anything to do with us, and so he keeps out of our way," and hid her mortification in silence.

Neither of them was right. Mr. Elmering had been feeling tired and depressed for several days; and, on the morning after his adventure in the water, he awoke with a racking headache.

After sending away his breakfast untasted and trying in vain to sit up at his desk, where all the manuscripts looked crazed, he threw himself down on a sofa and admitted the agreeable conviction that he must be really ill. It was a fine, bright, summer day, but Mr. Elmering felt chilled to the bone.

Even the cheerful wood fire, which Paul kindled at his master's desire, failed to impart its warmth to his shivering frame, and he lay languidly looking at it for hours together, too apathetic to change his position. Evening came, and Mr. Elmering was no better.

"I am afraid I must see a doctor," he said to

Paul, later. "I don't know one in Fairweather, but you may bring the nearest, I daresay he'll do."

"And if the doctor should be asking me, sir, what you thought was the matter with you," suggested Paul, the prudent, "should I say a cold or a fever, now?"

"I don't care, you can say smallpox, if you like," said Mr. Elmering, shutting his eyes in weary indifference to all things, himself included. "I was in a house where there was a case of it not long ago."

Mr. Elmering had no idea that this speech would be taken for anything more than idle words. If he had but seen the horror-stricken countenance which Paul took out of his room and into the kitchen.

"What on earth is the matter with you, man? And what are you snatching at your hat like that for? Is the master worse?" inquired Mary Ann.

"Worse? He couldn't be worse. He thinks he's got the smallpox. There's a train leaves for New York in thirty minutes, I've just time to reach the station. I didn't engage to be a hospital nurse, no, that I didn't. You'd better get him a doctor," cried Paul, vanishing out of the back door into the twilight.

"Smallpox! And me a girl with a complexion to ruin! The heathens there are in the world!" shrieked Mary Ann.

And braving danger far enough to run up to her room and secure her personal and bust bonnet, she also vanished from the house as her fellow-servant had done.

A little later Mr. Elmering heard, as in a half-dream, the distant whistle of the locomotive on its way to New York, quite unconscious that it was bearing away his two faithless domestics behind it.

It was only after he had rung his bell and called their names many times in vain that he began to suspect he was deserted, and allowed himself to get angry. Hour after hour passed away and no one came.

Restless and in pain, dozing at intervals, and awaking himself with a moan and a start, he got through the long night somehow, and saw the first glimmer of daylight struggling at his window with the darkness.

He made an effort to descend to the lower rooms, but was forced to turn back, sick and giddy, at the top of the staircase, which had lost its usual solid character and was reeling and quivering in the tipsiest manner.

Mr. Elmering crept back to his sofa so exhausted with the exertion he had just made that he knew there was no use in attempting to repeat it. What was going to become of him, he wondered? Was he to be left alone there to die?

The sun mounted higher and higher, the day wore on, and the empty rooms about him remained silent as the tomb.

"Have you noticed, Margaret, that there is nobody to be seen about Mr. Elmering's to-day?" said Mrs. Ralston to her daughter that afternoon. "I am really afraid something is wrong."

"What could be wrong, mamma? Mr. Elmering is probably absent. He often is."

"But he leaves his servants, Margaret. Kitty says the kitchen door stands open, but she has seen nothing of the servants all day. Don't you think we should send somebody in to find out what the matter is?"

"And perhaps have Mr. Elmering resent our officiousness as a liberty. I advise you not to meddle, mamma."

Margaret felt, secretly, a little uneasy herself. She remembered Kate's ominous predictions concerning the "fine city servants," and the horrors of the morning paper returned freshly to her mind.

Could she ever forgive herself for remaining coldly inactive if anything really had happened to Mr. Elmering, and they owing him so great a debt of gratitude?

But though Margaret was not usually wanting in moral courage, she shrank before the image of Mr. Elmering, with sarcastic eyebrows and half-suppressed smile, receiving the apologetic explanations of a deputation which had invaded

his premises to ascertain whether he was alive or dead, and regarding the romantic raid as one of the natural vagaries of a pack of women imbued with stage tendencies. While she was hesitating the postman rang the bell, and Fanny came in a moment afterwards.

"A letter, mamma—only one for you."

"Read it, will you, Margaret? It's very odd that my glasses are always out of the way when I want them. Why, for Heaven's sake, child, what is the letter about? What is it?" cried Mrs. Ralston, as Margaret started up with flashing eyes and heightened colour.

"Who ever heard of such baseness? Mamma, the letter is from Mr. Elmering's Paul. He says his master is ill with the smallpox and that he and Mary Ann have left, and he hopes we will see that Mr. Elmering is provided with a doctor. What dreadful creatures! They left him all alone and told nobody. Why, he has been alone ever since last night. I will go over there this minute, and you must send for Dr. Allison."

"Margaret! Margaret!" moaned Mrs. Ralston.

"He saved Fanny's life," cried Margaret, and ran out of the room.

Mr. Elmering, ill and faint, and half delirious with thirst, was roused from a vivid fancy of cool water rippling over stones by the sound of a footstep flying along the corridor outside and pausing at different doors.

"Thank God, there is somebody, at last," he said, aloud, with a sense of relief that was almost overpowering. He would have been glad to see even one of his recreant servants; but when his door flew open it was Margaret Ralston who stood upon the threshold and whose dark eyes, bright with mingled sympathy and indignation, met his.

"Oh! Mr. Elmering, I am so sorry!" she claimed, coming to his side. "We only knew five minutes ago of your being ill and alone here. I hope there is some law for punishing those wicked servants of yours. Poor fellow! now you must have suffered."

"Yes—but I think I am better now," he answered, vaguely, turning away his head to hide the tears that rushed to his eyes as Margaret's hand fell for a moment, soft as a snowflake, on his forehead. That she, of all people, should be the one to answer his longing for the sight of a human face might have struck both of them at another time as a fine bit of retributive justice. But Margaret thought of nothing but making the sick man comfortable; and he submitted with a sort of wondering gratitude to let her perform a variety of little offices for him—to bring him water and bathe his head and arrange the disordered room and the manuscripts. He never remembered once that this ministering angel with the bright, sweet, energetic looks and ways was the Miss Ralston who gave readings. Indeed I believe Mr. Elmering fell in love with Margaret then and there, though he did not find it out immediately.

In due time the doctor arrived and pronounced him ill of nothing worse than a severe influenza, and the phantom of smallpox having thus been laid to rest Mrs. Ralston at once joined her daughter, and there was henceforth no lack of kind services about the invalid.

Indeed, as his strength returned and his nurses slackened in their assiduities, he almost began to regret the days of his illness, when the double house had been virtually a single house.

He felt ashamed of his former attitude of stately isolation; nothing, he vowed, should force him to resume it, not even the little air of cool reserve which Margaret seemed inclined to cultivate from the moment her patient was really convalescent.

They had discussed many things by that time and each had been surprised to find an unexpectedly congenial companion in the other, but not a word had been uttered on the subject of Margaret's profession or Mr. Elmering's antipathy to women who sought "careers."

But one morning Mr. Elmering happened to come into Mrs. Ralston's little parlour and find Margaret alone.

"I did not see you yesterday," he said, almost

in the tone of a man who has a right to complain of something.

"I was away all day," answered Margaret. "To be frank, Mr. Elmering, I was obliged to see the manager of a lecturing bureau about my winter's engagements. Business is business, you know."

She looked up at him a little defiantly and a little curiously glad to have broken the ice at last.

"I thought you had given up that sort of thing," was all he said.

"I don't know why I should."

"You like your profession so much?"

"It is not a question of liking with me, Mr. Elmering, but of bread and butter and self-respect," said Margaret, looking her proudest. "To be sure mamma is better off than when I began my readings, but our circumstances are far from justifying me in remaining idle. And one must do what one can do, not always what one would. I know what you think of me, Mr. Elmering, but if you knew in what straits we have been, and what mountains of difficulty my one poor little talent has helped us over, even you would not blame me."

Even you! Mr. Elmering winced.

"You are mistaken, Margaret," he said, slowly. "You don't know what I think of you."

"I read your article on that subject two years ago."

"Indeed! But, Margaret, that was written before I had met you."

I suppose Margaret was satisfied with Mr. Elmering's opinions as modified to suit her own case, for some time afterwards she became Mrs. Elmering.

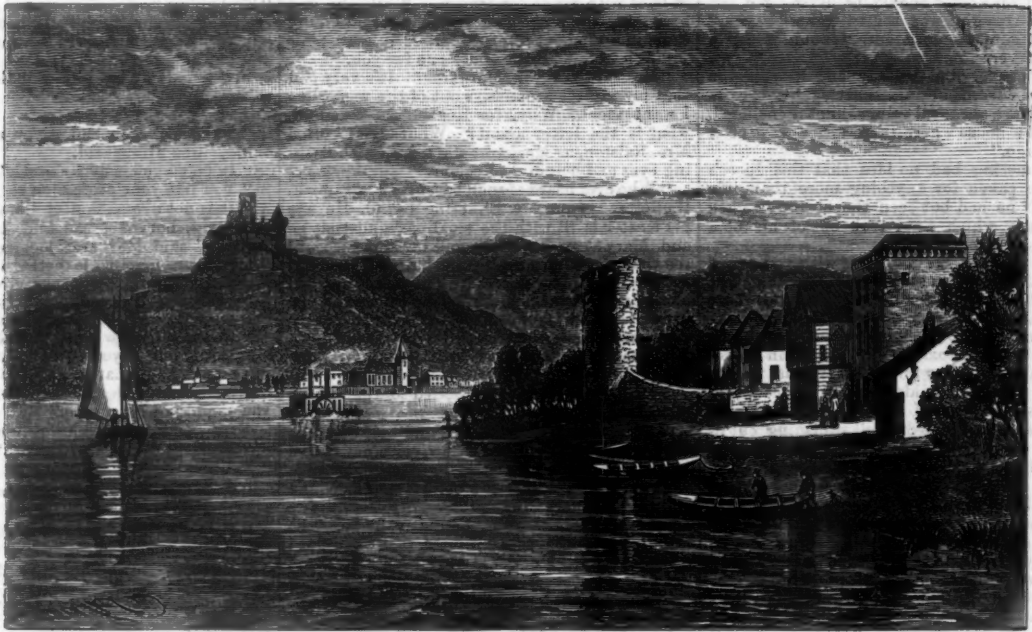
"But I really and truly suspect," said Margaret, laughing, as she told me this story not long ago, "that he married me for the sake of restoring one woman permanently to the domestic sphere. A man must have faith in a theory who makes such an immense sacrifice to it as himself!"

THE clover leaf, fern leaf, daisies and butter-flies are pretty fancies in jewellery, and are the favourite designs in silver filigree for ficiu and scarf pins.

A GLOUCESTERSHIRE nobleman, owning large estates, is making a novel experiment to render land more remunerative. He has planted 13 acres with gooseberry and currant trees, 11 acres with strawberry plants, and 35 acres with plum trees; while a large portion of park and wood of 200 acres has been converted into rabbit warrens and surrounded with iron fencing.

THE land lying unoccupied at the Blackfriars end of the Thames Embankment may now be purchased at the rate of £84,825 per acre. As its value ten years ago was estimated at £40,000, intending purchasers should enter into negotiations at once, for, at this rate of progression, every week's delay enhances its value to the amount of considerably over £90 an acre.

A NEW ZEALAND correspondent describes an amusing incident which recently attended the efforts of a good missionary to introduce the sanctity of marriage among the natives. Among the candidates for the rite was a very much-married Maori, named Ngatapapara, who, directly the clergyman had arrived at the direction to join hands, was set upon by a round dozen of anxious wives; two or three seized each hand and arm, others laid fast hold of his legs, and the remainder struggled fiercely round him. The good missionary paused in dismay, but the perplexed bridegroom cried, "Go on," and on finding his request was not complied with, shouted out, "If you don't get along, and bring this kind of thing to a finish, there'll be another dozen of them here in less than no time; and when they find I haven't got a flopper left to hang on by, they'll drag off the last shred of blanketing I have over me." Alarmed at this prospect, the clergyman hurried over the remainder of the service. But it was a useless form, since no one could tell which was Ngatapapara's lawfully-wedded wife, and he remained as much married as before.



[MARKSBURG CASTLE.]

MARKSBURG CASTLE.

No sweep of the Rhine is more glorious in its beauty than that leading up to the picturesque town of Braubach. Situated at the foot of an almost conical hill, the summit of which is surmounted by the imposing Castle of Marksburg, the approach to it marks a feature in his travels through the Fatherland which the tourist never forgets.

The Castle itself is an unaltered specimen of a stronghold of the middle ages, and is even now in such a perfect state of preservation that it has only ceased to be used as a prison within the last fifteen years.

It is indeed the beau-ideal of the old Ritterschloss, with mysterious narrow passages, winding stairs, vaults hewn in the living rock, which served in bygone times as dungeons, among them the horrible pit called Hundloch—literally Doghole—into which prisoners were let down as a basket into a well by a windlass; and above all a Chamber of Torture—*Folteskummer*—from which the rack was only removed a few years ago. One of these prison vaults to which we have referred was that in which the Emperor Henry IV. was confined.

Tradition says that a secret passage leads through the rock to the town on the banks of the river, but this is not now traceable; that it did exist, however, we know from the following story:

At the end of the fourteenth century Marksburg Castle was in the hands of Count Olaf von Braubach, one of the most ferocious and blood-thirsty robber-knights of the Rhine. Far and near he levied with unshrinking hand whatever in the way of plunder he desired to possess himself of, without regard to any rights of property, and so notorious had he become that the Ritterschloss formed the headquarters of all the ruffianly soldiers of fortune with whom at that time Europe abounded, and the terror of Count Olaf's name spread far and wide.

From Marksburg there issued every now and then a swarm of Von Braubach's robber-horde,

and woe betide the unfortunate peasant whose bad luck led him to fall into their hands. But not only was it the peasants who suffered from his raids—many of the surrounding nobility, themselves but small landed proprietors, had been seized and held to ransom, the payment of the sum demanded being the only means of escaping a terrible death in the depths of the Hundloch, or in the agonies awaiting the miserable victims in the fearful Chamber of Torture—the *Folteskummer*.

The autumn day was drawing to a close when some twenty or thirty of Count Olaf's ruffianly men-at-arms were returning from one of their forages, and ascending the narrow road that led round the conical hill to the Castle, drove before them the cattle they had succeeded in stealing up the Rhine valley.

But they had other plunder besides cattle. In their midst, seated on a led horse, securely bound, was a fair and handsome young man of about four or five-and-twenty. He had been deprived of his arms, evidently not without a severe struggle, as the blood-dotted scarfs which had been bound round his wounds amply testified; but his noble and haughty glance lacked nothing of its daring as he looked proudly round him as the party entered the courtyard of Marksburg Castle.

Count Olaf von Braubach had not formed one of the robber band, and before him the captive was at once led. Seated at the end of the hall under a dais, the debris of his late orgie still scattered around him, he raised himself in his seat and sternly regarded his captive.

"So we have you at last, Gustave von Rosenheim! It is thus then you are to clear the Rhine valley of that ruffian Von Braubach and his robber crew! Ha! ha! Brave words, young man; but you failed to reckon with whom you had to do."

"Not so! I vowed by Our Lady of the Seven Dolours to clear the land of you and your horde of ruffians, and by her help I will do so!"

Noble words, nobly spoken by the gallant young knight, but with little hope of their ever being carried into effect.

"Ha! ha! young sir—so brave? Well, we shall see. Rudolf!" and as he called a gigantic ruffian, yet covered with the dust of the foray,

stood forth. "Rudolf, see all prepared to give our young guest his farewell journey down the Hundloch; if he can come back from thence let him fulfil his vow if he can!"

Brave as he was Gustave von Rosenheim could not repress a shudder as the robber chief-tain announced his doom. Well he knew the terrible fate in store for the victims consigned to the dreaded "Doghole," in whose awful depths, amid the festering corpses of those who had preceded him, death in its most appalling form awaited him.

"Do your worst," undauntedly said the young knight. "Our Lady will aid me—ay, and see too that I fulfil my vow."

The rage which flushed with scarlet the visage of Count Olaf von Braubach contrasted strikingly with the pallor that overspread the countenance of his fair daughter Rosamond at the brave young knight's words.

What! should he, so young, so handsome, be consigned to this fearful fate? Forbid it, Heaven!

But her father was not a man to be trifled with, and the doom had gone forth!

Seized by two stalwart retainers Gustave von Rosenheim was led to the mouth of the horrible pit, still securely bound, and at once secured to the chain and lowered into its noisome depths.

"So much for him! Let Our Lady help him if she can!"

With a savage laugh he turned back to the Hall to resume his orgies, an applauding throng of retainers attending him.

But Rosamond?

Touched to the heart she had sought her own chamber, and had there thrown herself at the feet of her old nurse, Theresa.

"Oh! nurse, nurse! you know the secret of the Hundloch; nay, do not deny it! I once heard you say so. Tell it to me now I implore you. Surely you could not see so much goodness consigned to a doom so fearful."

But it was not without many tears and entreaties that old Theresa was at length brought to yield, but she did at last.

Down through narrow, winding passages hewn in the solid rock went the two women, the elder one leading the way, and after many a turn and steep descent at last she stopped.

The sight was a fearful one.

Seen by the dim and flickering light of the lamps the two women carried the sight was indeed a terrible one. Scattered around were the bones of former victims, and sitting on a heap of half-putrid bodies was Gustave von Rosenheim.

To him Rosamond did truly seem an angel of succour, even Theresa, old and repulsive as she was, seemed encircled by a halo.

It did not take long to undo the prisoner's bonds, and then under the old woman's guidance, after a long and tortuous passage, they gained the banks of the river.

"Ah! maiden, how ever can I thank you? That I owe you my life you know well. Say, what can I do to repay so great a debt?" and as the young knight spoke he raised her hand to his lips.

"One thing you must do," broke in the old woman, "you must take us with you, our lives here are not worth a moment's purchase. See, here is a boat, and under the shadows of the night we must all flee together."

There was no gainsaying her words, and soon down the bosom of old Father Rhine their light shallop sped, impelled by the vigorous strokes of the young Knight of Rosenheim, whose mother a few hours after gave a warm welcome to the saviour of her son.

Two months later Marksburg Castle was surprised by Gustave von Rosenheim, and the greater number of its ruffianly crew perished in the assault, the life of Count Orlaf being spared at the request of his daughter, who stood soon after by his side the happy wife of the young Count of Rosenheim.

Years afterwards, looking from the Castle-top down the lovely valley, they used to trace their course on the night of the escape from the Hundloch of Marksburg.

OUR COLUMNS FOR THE CURIOUS.

WANT OF LIGHTING IN LONDON, 1685.—There is wanting a law wherein, although not all England is concerned, yet a great part thereof is, that, in the capital of England, not only all the streets and lanes should be kept clean that all sorts of persons might walk as commodiously in winter as in summer, which is of late years brought to pass in that great and populous city of Paris in France; but, also, as is done in that city all the winter nights: in the middle of all the streets there should be hanged out so many candles for lamps as that all sorts of persons in this great trading city might walk about their business as conveniently and safely by night as by day.

SATANIC ORIGIN OF ONIONS AND GARLIC.—I have seen it recounted in history, says Evlia, that when Satan stepped out from Paradise on the earth garlic sprang up from the spot whereon he had put his left foot, and that onions sprouted out from the place whereon he set his right. But both verily are very pleasant food.

CURIOUS SMALL HORSES IN INDIA.—In the Nabob's stable at Cossimbazar was a collection of curious small horses, several not exceeding three feet in height, and one, a most extraordinary dwarf, under that size, had the head, chest, and body of a full-grown horse.

ERASMUS AGAINST CHURCH SINGING.—We have brought, says Erasmus, a tedious and capricious kind of music into the house of God, a tumultuous noise of different voices, such as, I think, was never heard in the theatres either of the Greeks or Romans; for the keeping up whereof whole flocks of boys are maintained at a great expense, whose time is spent in learning such glibble-gabble, while they are taught nothing that is good or useful. Whole troops of lazy lubbers are also maintained solely for the same purpose—at such an expense is the church

for a thing that is pestiferous. Whereupon he expresses a wish that it were exactly calculated how many poor men might be relieved and maintained out of the salaries of these singers, and concludes with a reflection on the English for their fondness for this kind of service.

FACILITY OF CONCEALMENT IN LONDON.—Whoever, says Fielding (1750), considers the cities of London and Westminster, with the late vast addition of their suburbs, the great irregularity of their buildings, the immense number of lanes, alleys, courts, and bye-places, must think that had they been intended for the very purposes of concealment they could scarce have been better contrived. Upon such a view the whole appears as a vast wood or forest, in which a thief may harbour with as great security as wild beasts do in the deserts of Africa or Arabia.

OLD ENGLISH BREAKFAST FARE IN A BARONIAL FAMILY.—The regimen of diet proscribed by the book (an ancient manuscript of the Percy family) from which the following extracts are made, was, with a few variations, extended to the whole of the family:

The regulations respecting the breakfasts of the earl and the countess and their children during Lent.

Breakfast for my lord and my lady:

First, a loaf of bread in trenchers, 2 manchets, a quart of beer, a quart of wine, 2 pieces of salt fish, 6 bacon'd herring, 4 white herring, or a dish of sprats.

Breakfasts for my Lord Percy and Master Thomas Percy:

Item, half a loaf of household bread, a manchet, a bottle of beer, a dish of butter, and a piece of salt fish, a dish of sprats, or three white herring.

Breakfast for the nursery, for my Lady Margaret and Master Ingram Percy:

Item, a manchet, a quart of beer, a dish of butter, a piece of salt fish, a dish of sprats, or 3 white herring.

And except the season of Lent and fish days, the ordinary allowance for this part of the family throughout the year was as follows:

Breakfasts of flesh days daily throughout the year.

Breakfasts for my lord and my lady:

First, a loaf of bread in trenchers, 2 manchets, 1 quart of beer, a quart of wine, half a chine of mutton, or else a chine of beef boiled.

Breakfast for my Lord Percy and Master Thomas Percy.

Item, half a loaf of household bread, a manchet, 1 bottle of beer, a cheeking or else three mutton bones boiled.

Breakfasts for the nursery for my Lady Margaret and Master Ingram Percy:

Item, a manchet, 1 quart of beer, and 3 mutton bones boiled.

The system of household economy established in this family must be supposed to correspond with the practice of the whole kingdom, and enables us to trace the progress of refinement, and, in short, to form an estimate of national manners at a remote period.

ENGLISH CAPS.—Caps in the reign of James seem to have been articles of great splendour if the following descriptions of three can be relied on. One was of red velvet, with sixteen rows of silver lace; another of tissue cloth of silver; a third, richly embroidered with gold and silver, thick set with spangles, the fleaked lace clear gold.

THE FIRST POSTMASTER GENERAL.—James I. constituted "the office of Postmaster of England for foreign parts, who should have the sole taking up, sending and conveying of all packets and letters into those parts, with power to take moderate salaries, and did appoint first Matthew de Queter to execute that employment; afterwards William Frizel and Thomas Wittering and their deputies, to do all things appertaining to the same. The merchants of the English nation praying his then Majesty to continue them in that office, his most excellent Majesty that now is (1632), affecting the welfare of his people, and considering how much it imports his state and this realm that the secrets thereof be not disclosed to foreign nations by a promiscuous use of transmitting or taking up of

foreign letters, was pleased to appropriate the said office to Frizel and Wittering aforesaid, with prohibition to all others to intermeddle therewith.

FEES FOR MASTERS OF THE CEREMONIES.—The fees paid to the two Masters of the Ceremonies, Sir Lewis Luyakener, and Sir John Fennet, by the Dutch Ambassadors between the 20th of November, 1621, and February 16, 1623, were 1,100 gulden.

CUSTOM OF BOWING TOWARDS THE EAST.—Heylyn in his "Life of Laud" says: Most countrywomen in the time of my first remembrance, and long after, made their obeysance toward the East, before they betook themselves to their seats. This was then taken, or rather mistaken for courtesy made unto the ministers. But it was the old practice of adoration towards the East.

FIRST COPPER HALFPENCE.—In the reign of James I. it appears that copper halfpence and farthings began to be coined. Tradesmen had commonly carried on their retail business chiefly by means of leaden tokens. The small silver penny was soon lost, and at this time was nowhere to be found.

PREDICTED DELUGE IN 1524.—In the year of our Lord 1524, one Bolton, Prior of St. Bartholomew's, listening to the prognosticators who generally then foretold that upon the Watery Trigon which should happen in the month of February of that year, many thousands should perish by a deluge, caused a house to be built upon Harrow-on-the-Hill, whither he carried for himself and family provisions for two months, so great a fear of an inundation possessed him, and so great a credence gave he to the almanack makers' predictions; yet was there not a fairer season many years before.

WANT OF A CIRCULATING MEDIUM.—The want of copper coin in Peru occasioned a curious practice which St. Maw was told of at Truxillo. A person coming to the market of that city and not wishing to spend a real upon every article, purchases a real's worth of eggs, with which he or she proceeds to market, buying an egg's worth of vegetables from one and so on from others, till what was wanted has been got. The eggs are taken as current payment and finally purchased themselves by those who require them for use.

ROASTED PORTER.—This was a fashionable fancy in Sir G. Beaumont's youth (George III.). He has now a set of silver cups made for the purpose. They were brought red hot to table, the porter poured into them in that state, and it was a pleasure to see with what alarm an inexperienced guest ventured to take the cup at the moment that the liquor foamed over and cooled it.

EATING GLASS.—There was a mad fashion amongst riotous drinkers about 1792 of eating the wine glass—biting a piece out, grinding it with the teeth and actually swallowing it, the enjoyment being to see how an aspirant cut his mouth. Mortimer, the artist, did it, and is said never to have recovered from the consequences.

FIRST POST-CHAISE BUILT IN ENGLAND.—The first post-chaise built in England was built in Queen Street, Lincoln's Inn. It had but two wheels and opened in the front. Birch describes it as resembling a bathing machine. But in fact it was exactly the Portuguese sije.

MARRIAGE WHEN SEASONABLE.—"Marriage comes in on the 13th of January, and at Septuagesima Sunday. It is out again until Low Sunday, at which time it comes in again and goes not out until Rogation Sunday; thence it is forbidden until Trinity Sunday, and from thence it is unforbidden till Advent Sunday, and comes not in again until the 13th January."—(Register of Norton Church latter part of seventeenth century.)

A TOUCHING ROMANCE.

A POOR young girl came one day into one of the bureaux of the Mont-de-Piété of Paris to pawn a bundle of clothes upon which they gave

her only three francs. For fifteen consecutive years she came regularly to pay the interest on this modest sum, amounting to a few centimes, without having sufficient cash to redeem the clothes. The administration, struck by the care that she took to preserve this little deposit of clothing, sought information concerning her, and learned that, working unceasingly at her miserable home in a poor little den, this *ouvrière* in linen, good and honest, was scarce able to earn enough to supply her daily living, and that in spite of her toils and pains, she had never been able, in fifteen years' time, to raise the three francs necessary to redeem her precious little bundle. There was evidently in the conduct of this woman, so laborious and so good, and yet beautiful, a noble courage which took its source in noble sentiments. They requested her to come before the administration of the Mont-de-Piété, and there she was asked to take away, without payment, the modest bundle of necessities of which she had been so long deprived. It was then that they comprehended the beautiful spirit of this unfortunate. The little bundle was composed of a petticoat and a woman's fichu of some cheap stuff. Scarcely was it opened when she took these things in both hands and covered them with kisses, melting into tears. This was all that was left to her by her poor mother who had died fifteen years previously, and in order to preserve these precious relics she had borne religiously her pious tribute, as one goes to the cemetery to place flowers upon the tomb of a loved one on the day of a funeral anniversary.

WOMEN AS CIVIL SERVANTS.

THE work in which these women are engaged is not mere manual labour but requires careful application as well as skill of hand. One careless mistake involves endless trouble, for the accounts are kept with such precision that one penny miscalculated has to be searched for through numberless papers until it is checked. The hours are not long, but every moment spent in the office, except the dinner half-hour, is persistently employed, and the tension put on the power of the officers is too great to last over a longer time. Some few of the clerks are advised to retire after the six months' probation if it is found that although they could pass the examination they have not the quickness necessary for the work; but the greater number remain and advance gradually, the berths being too highly appreciated to be left for other employments.

In contrasting the work of the women with that of the men in the Post Office, the authorities say that the women are more conscientious, and take a greater interest in their occupation. This is perhaps only too easily accounted for when it is remembered what class of women are here employed. The three branches of the Post Office of which I am speaking were opened to women with the express intention of giving occupation to "ladies," and as each appointment has been made by the Postmaster-General this rule has been strictly adhered to. The women in the Telegraph Department and other Post Office work are distinct from those clerks, and their social position is not inquired into when they are admitted. But these specially-appointed clerks were not born with the prospect of work lying before them, and many a sad history is connected with their entrance on official life. The young men in the Post Office spend their time in exercise or amusement when the hours of work are over. Many of the women go home to continue their exertions in some other form. The salary is small, and one tries to increase it by giving lessons; another by sewing; a third in drudgery of a domestic kind. The continuous close application is often found a relief from pressing thoughts of great sorrow or loneliness; or there may perhaps be anxiety to rise as rapidly as possible to a higher position in some section, that a larger salary may be obtained. The clerks in some cases have others

depending on them. Lodgings, where two idiot brothers are her only companions, is the home of one woman. A solitary attic near London Bridge is the home of another of these clerks. Possibly the women plod more steadily than the men do. At any rate the authorities are satisfied that nothing is wanting among them of quiet, businesslike ways.

WILD ANIMALS AND THE TELEGRAPH.

SOME interesting facts are brought out in a paper by M. C. Nielsen of Christiania on the impression produced upon animals by the resonance of the vibration of telegraph wires. It is found that the black and green woodpeckers, for instance, which hunt for insects in the bark and in the heart of decaying trees, often peek inside the circular hole made transversely through telegraph posts, generally near the top. The phenomenon is attributed to the resonance produced in the post by the vibration of the wire, which the bird mistakes as the result of the operations of worms and insects in the interior of the post.

Everyone knows the fondness of bears for honey. It has been noticed that in mountainous districts they seem to mistake the vibratory sound of the telegraph wires for the grateful humming of bees, and rushing to the post look about for the hive. Not finding it on the post they scatter the stones at its base which help to support it, and, disappointed in their search, give the post a parting pat with their paw, thus showing their determination to kill at least any bees that might be about it. Indisputable traces of bears about prostrate posts and scattered stones prove that this really happens.

With regard to wolves, again, M. Nielsen states that when a vote was asked at the time for the first great telegraph lines, a member of the Storting said that although his district had no direct interest in the line proposed he would give his vote in its favour, because he knew the lines would drive the wolves from the districts through which they passed. It is well known that to keep off the ravages of hungry wolves in winter the farmers in Norway set up poles connected together by a line or rope, under which the wolves dare not pass. "And it is a fact," M. Nielsen states, "that when, twenty or more years ago, telegraph lines were carried over the mountains and along the valleys, the wolves totally disappeared, and a specimen is now a rarity." Whether the two circumstances are actually connected M. Nielsen does not venture to say.

THE CHAMELEON IN FABLE.

THE name "chameleon" is derived from two Greek words signifying "ground lion," a name singularly inappropriate, since it is one of those creatures which are specially fitted by their organisation to live on trees, and which are comparatively ill at ease when on the surface of the earth. It is by no means surprising, however, that this creature should have attracted the attention it has drawn, such is the singularity of its appearance and the peculiarities of its habits and properties. Neither is it surprising that it should have occasioned many errors and superstitions when we consider the erroneous beliefs current among ourselves with respect to our own toads and slow worms, efts, &c.

Aristotle was acquainted (as was to be expected of him) with the singular motions of its eyes, but even he fell into some curious mistakes respecting it, and he tells us that it has no spleen, and no blood, except in the vicinity of its head and eyes. Pliny is careful to restate these errors, and further tells us that it lives without eating or drinking, and, though generally an inoffensive animal, becomes terrible in the dog days. He also adds, on the authority

of Democritus, that it has the power of attracting to the earth birds of prey, so that they become in turn the prey of other animals, and that its head and neck, when burned on oak charcoal, will cause thunder and rain to occur simultaneously. On the other hand, he rejects as fabulous the Grecian belief that its right leg, cooked with a certain herb, has the power of making a person invisible; that the thigh of its left leg mixed with sow's milk will induce gout if the foot be rubbed with the compound, and that a man may be made to incur the hatred of all his fellow citizens by having his gate posts anointed with a mixture of chameleon's intestines and the renal secretion of an ape.

Aldrovandus informs us, on the authority of older writers, that if a viper passes beneath a tree in the branches of which a chameleon is perched, the latter will let fall some of its saliva upon the viper, which is thereby killed; and he further tells that elephants sometimes unwittingly eat chameleons among the leaves of the trees on which they feed, and that the meal is a fatal one unless the elephants have recourse to the wild olive as an antidote.

MISCELLANEOUS.

THE Marchioness Conyngham has given practical proof of her interest in the movement for the encouragement of the home woollen industries by selecting as the travelling dress of her daughter, Lady Constance—who was married recently to Mr. Combe—one of Bradford manufacture.

THERE is an old rumour current that Lord Kimberley has a scheme on hand to draw closer the relationship between the colonies and the mother country by conferring hereditary distinctions upon eminent colonists.

A REMARKABLE millinery triumph is called the "winning October hat," and is really artistic, if a trifle pronounced. It is a large poke shape, trimmed with black Spanish lace and peacock feathers laid flat on the brim, and on the left side is a modest bunch of sunflowers.

AT Newmarket the other day, Somerset, the winner of the July Stakes in 1872, was sold to a circus keeper for thirty guineas. The late Marquis of Anglesey paid 700 guineas for him as a yearling, and a year later he was sold to the late Earl of Lonsdale for 6,000 guineas.

LONDON shop assistants intend to apply to Parliament for an Act limiting the number of hours for which it may be lawful to employ them—in other words, to make it illegal for a shopman to stand too long behind a counter.

LADIES have just discovered a reason for giving a unanimous vote in favour of electricity—it makes the eyes sparkle as if they were diamonds.

IT is stated that the Earl of Roseberry has purchased the site of a row of valuable houses in Sloane Street, and intends to erect there a house which for space and magnificence will leave everything behind, not excepting even Baron Grant's Kensington-Gore house.

IT is rumoured that Mr. Gladstone contemplates in his next Budget making all property passing under marriage settlements pay probate duty. This plan would, of course, virtually abolish all succession duty at the rate of one per cent., and lead to a reduction in the number of clerks in the various public departments affected.

ONE great change in walking the London streets is the number of fire lodges which are to be met with stationed in all the busy parts of town. They are painted red, and are in structure not unlike cabmen's shelters. There the members of the fire brigade are housed, and have their escapes and appliances in readiness at hand. It is proposed this winter to do something similar to this for the police. Of course, we all know that each district of the City is divided into beats, and that all the flagways are traversed in this course every day by the iron heel of the constable. We know these things

generally, and "the authorities" know them specifically—that is, they know where at a given hour a policeman either is or ought to be. But the position of the householder is different. We have entered on the season of burglaries—and it has opened in the capital with great vigour and variety. So many complaints have been made to headquarters that the idea is being considered of establishing in every district certain shelters or depôts where a policeman would be sure to be found within a certain interval of time, and which other policemen on neighbouring beats would be bound to visit at ascertained times.

KING THEEBAW of Burmah has been getting rid of a few false prophets in the usual manner. These unfortunates were misled by the comet, and were rash enough to prophesy that the last addition to Theebaw's family would be a boy, and not only so, but that when he came to man's estate he would drive the British out of India as well as out of Burmah. A girl was born, and the relatives of these prophets now mourn their departed friends.

UPWARDS of 1,500 persons, who were unable to get beds on the Tuesday night of the Royal visit to Swansea, attended the all-night performance at the theatre.

SIR WILFRID LAWSON combines shorthorn breeding with his advocacy of temperance principles. At one of the Holker sales he bought a bull from the Duke of Devonshire at an extravagant price, which, however, was found dead on the farm at Brayton. With regretful look at the deceased beast the genial baronet, on the spur of the moment, struck up the following epitaph:

"Here lies Baron Oxford 6th
Quiet and cool,
Bred by a duke and
Bought by a fool."

THE Radical candidate for Cricklade, Mr. Michell, who is a director of the Great Western Railway, made a quarter of a million of money in the feather trade in the City. He is the largest shareholder but one (Mr. Bilby, of Liverpool) in the Great Western Railway, holding about £200,000 worth of that stock.

THE great engineering feats either accomplished or in progress throughout the world have inspired an idea not less notable than the Channel Tunnel or the Panama Canal. It is now seriously proposed to connect Great Britain with Ireland by an isthmus, along which trains may travel and the discomforts of the sea voyage be avoided. This seems more like a chapter from Jules Verne's stories than anything else. But it is a sober matter of fact. The site has been selected, and all that is now wanted is capital, which is being privately but diligently sought.

It is reported from Kharkow that a woman named Szansparoff has recently died there at the age of 137.

THE death of another centenarian has been registered—viz., that of Sarah White, an inhabitant of West Bromwich, at the age of 106 years six months.

MUCH excitement has been caused in Cairo by the publication by the Egyptian newspaper that Mahomet was a false prophet.

It is anticipated that the St. Gothard Tunnel will be completed several weeks before it is opened on New Year's Day, 1882.

A NEW lifeboat has been presented to the city of St. Andrew by Mr. John Mills, of Dundee, and placed at Boarhills, a dangerous part of the coast.

FRIGHTENED by the sensational warning that the end of the world would come this month, a collier's wife near Neath cut the throat of her infant, and then tried to commit suicide.

AN Arras paper announces the suspension of the Channel tunnel works, owing to the change of temperature. Operations will probably not be resumed till the spring.

THE authorities of the city of Hamburg have arrested and imprisoned a Mormon elder who was some time ago expelled from that city for endeavouring to make proselytes and persuading them to embark for Salt Lake City. His offence

consists in his return to the scene of his former operations for the purpose of renewing his propagandism.

"I THOUGHT YOU KNEW."

A GRAVE MISTAKE.

I.

"MARY, I thought you knew—I THOUGHT YOU KNEW—

That when I went away 'twas all for you ;
I thought you understood that day and night

It was your image made all labour light.
Alas for hard-won gold ! What do I care
For anything, since you are false as fair ?"

II.

"How should I know?" she asked, with flushing cheek
And flashing eye. "I could as well read Greek

As utter silence; and you never said,
'Mary, I love you.' Now suppose, instead
Of being sure I wanted gold, you'd tried
If poor but honest love could win your bride."

III.

"'Tis true I never spoke; I thought you knew

For five sweet years, close to your side, love grew.

Through long green fields, through woods,
By the sea strand,

Have we not walked together, hand in hand?

And then our parting by the garden gate;
Mary, I never doubted you would wait."

IV.

"Five years—remember it—you, day by day,

Stole with sweet looks and sighs my heart away;

Took the first fragrance of my youth to be
To your dull life perfume and melody;

Then far you went, lured by some golden bait,
And left me here to hope and fear and wait."

V.

"So then, when Philip came into my life,
And said, with frank devotion, 'Be my wife,'

I knew that love was true, and gave my hand,
With my heart in it. Women understand

These words; and had you to your love been true,
You had not 'THOUGHT,' but been QUITE SURE I knew."

VI.

"And so 'tis well that we should say,
'Good-bye,'

I could not give one vain regretful sigh
Unto the past; but if you love again,

I pray you do not give such needless pain;
Love in uncertain soil will cease to grow,
So if you wish to marry, tell her so."

L. E. B.

GEMS OF THOUGHT.

HE who can take advice is sometimes superior to him who can give it.

TAKE all the interest out of the world, and there wouldn't be friendship enough left for seed.

EVERYTHING great is not always good; but all good things are great.

THE over-grown rich are above thinking of any who need their assistance.

THERE are moments when the heart awakens from a sleep to feel itself alone and in the dark.

BEWARE of judging hastily. It is better to suspend an opinion than to retract an assertion.

IT is wise and well to look on the cloud of sorrow as though we expect to see it turn into a rainbow.

SOLITUDE is necessary in the moments when grief is strongest and thought most troubled.

A YEAR of pleasure passes like a fleeting breeze; but a moment of misfortune seems an age of pain.

PURSUe what you know to be attainable, make truth your object, and your studies will make you a wise man.

HOUSEHOLD TREASURES.

CHEBBY BOUNCE.—Fill a stone jar with wild cherries and cover them with whisky; let it stand a month; then pour off the liquor, wash the cherries without breaking the stones, and strain the juice that comes from them through a bag, and add it to the liquor; sweeten every two quarts of the liquor with a pound of lump sugar and a half-pint of water boiled to a thick syrup. The cordial can be used immediately, but improves with age.

APPLE MARMALADE.—Peel and slice the apples; weigh and put into a kettle and stew until tender; wash fine, and add sugar in proportion of pound to pound; let them cook slowly, stirring very frequently; be careful not to allow it to scorch; when the mass has a jellied appearance it is done. About half an hour will generally be found sufficient for making the marmalades after adding the sugar.

THE BITES OF INSECTS.—When, as happened last season, fine and warm summer weather entails a small plague of flies and insects it is well to remember that the prompt application of an alkali to the bitten part allays the irritation, and commonly at once relieves the suffering consequent on a class of injuries which, though small, are often exceedingly annoying, and even troublesome, especially in the case of children and persons with sensitive skins. Soda and ammonia will answer the purpose.

STATISTICS.

STATISTICAL RESEARCHES as to the colour of the hair and eyes of children have been made in all the cantons of Switzerland, with the exception of Berne, Geneva, and Tessino. The investigation as to the first of these cantons is now terminated, and the results of the examinations of 94,221 children are published by Professor Studer in the proceedings of the Berne Society of Natural History (No. 939), and are accompanied by four coloured maps, which show graphically the results. It is seen from these researches that in the canton of Berne the dark type prevails over the fair, but that the pure types are not so numerous, especially in the central parts, as the mixed ones. The pure fair type, which makes nine to eleven per cent. in the north-eastern parts of the canton, increases to the south (11 to 14 per cent. in the middle parts, and 15 to 20 per cent. in the Alps), and reaches its highest percentage in the secluded valley of the Saanen (28 per cent.). The dark type is most numerous in two regions—that of the western lakes and Old Rottia (21 to 29 per cent.), whilst in the middle parts it reaches only 21 to 25 per cent., and only 16 to 20 per cent. in some secluded valleys. After having shown the distribution of mixed types, Professor Studer considers these data in connection with history, and comes to several interesting conclusions.

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NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

C. H.—Put half a dozen rusty nails in a pint vessel of water, and after they have remained there a week or ten days pour off the water and bathe the face with it night and morning until the freckles are removed.

B. F.—Hard cyder will, it is said, remove liver spots. Drink one or two glasses every day.

F. L.—To get rid of cockroaches, strew equal parts of Paris green and brown sugar about the places infested with them.

R. G.—The proportions are three ounces of castor oil and one ounce of the best French brandy.

C. W.—1. Oxalic acid will remove ink from white goods. 2. To take ink-stains out of paper, apply muriatic acid, diluted in six times the quantity of water, and in a minute or two wash off with clean water.

H. P.—Where gold or silver fish are placed in vessels in rooms they should be kept in soft water. The water will require to be changed according to the size of the vessel or the number of fish kept therein, but it should not be done too often. A vessel that will hold about a pail of water may sustain three fish for a fortnight, and so in proportion. A few crumbs of bread may be dropped in once or twice a week.

N. H.—A few drops of sulphuric acid will remove most stains from the hands without injuring them. Care must however be taken not to drop it upon the clothes. The juice of ripe tomatoes will remove the stains of walnuts, as well as other stains, without harm to the skin.

T. M.—“Silver weddings” were instituted in Germany many centuries ago. They are festivals held by married couples on attaining the twenty-fifth anniversary of their wedding day; on the fiftieth it is a “golden wedding.”

R. E.—A substitute for cream is made by pouring boiling tea upon a beaten egg gradually, stirring it all the time to keep it from curdling.

S. A.—To reduce your weight, avoid the use of food containing much starch or sugar, drink sparingly of sweetened beverages, and take as much exercise as you possibly can every day.

J. E. M.—There are no words which describe the relationship between your cousin's children and yourself. They are not first cousins, nor are they so far removed as second cousins, which is the relationship they bear to your children.

N. N.—We can find no mention of a one-winged bird. There is a bird in New Zealand called the apteryx, which has only rudimentary wings, with no power of flight. It belongs to the family which contains the cassowary, emu, mooruk, and ostrich.

L. E.—A very strengthening drink is made as follows: Beat the yolk of a fresh egg with a little sugar. Add a very little brandy—say a dessertspoonful—beat the white to a strong froth and stir it into the yolk. Pour the whole into a tumbler, fill it up with fresh milk, and add a little nutmeg.

C. E. E.—To make ox-tail soup, put three ox-tails into three quarts of water, with half a dozen cloves and a little salt and pepper. Boil three hours; strain the soup into an earthen pot; let it stand until the next day; then take off all the fat. Cut two onions in small pieces, and cut the ox-tails the same. Put them with the onions, and with butter fry a nice brown. Cut up two carrots, two turnips, and half a head of white cabbage. Put them into the soup with the onions and tails, and boil two hours.

G. W.—A marriage of a Roman Catholic and Protestant, whether performed by a Catholic priest or Protestant, is valid and cannot be set aside or broken except for cause or by due process of law.

H. W.—The intermarriage of first cousins has long been a subject of debate with the medical profession. The weight of evidence is to the effect that if the parties are perfectly sound and healthy, there is no reason why the offspring should not be so, but that where the practice continues through two or three generations the progeny deteriorate, mentally and physically, and also become scrofulous and liable to deformities, and even to idiocy. Every farmer or stock-raiser knows the result of inbreeding for two or three generations, and the laws of nature in this respect are the same in the human species as in animals.

“BONDAGE OF BRANDON.”

It is with some satisfaction that we announce to our readers that this successful story, written by Mr. Bracebridge Hemyng, and first published in our columns, has been reproduced, with the consent of the proprietor of the LONDON READER, in a Three Volume Novel by Mr. Maxwell, the eminent publisher, the husband of Miss Braddon.

Our CHRISTMAS NUMBER, Price Twopence, including 972, will contain a Complete Story of thrilling interest by Mr. Bracebridge Hemyng, entitled

THE WHITE NUN; OR, UNDER THE SNOW.

Also will be commenced in 972 a Serial Story by the well-known author, Mr. Ernest Brent, entitled

A LONG ESTRANGEMENT.

GEORGE AND REUBEN.

Two brothers named Green—
George and Reuben—were seen
At work every day in their mill;
And outside the sacks,
Ranged in old-fashioned stacks,
Their industry showed and their will.

All day ran the wheel,
Turning corn into meal—
Upon them prosperity smiled
The money rolled in
With a musical din—
A din which their hearing beguiled.

Yet once Reuben thought,
As his cottage he sought:
“I’m tired of the mill—it’s a bore.
With my money I know
To the town I may go,
And quickly make fifty times more.”

“Into stocks I shall go;
Then no labour I’ll know,
And the money I’ll roll in in a trice.
My praise all will kneel;
Like a nabob I’ll dwell
In a palace of fabulous price.”

He asked George to join
In his venture for coin,
But George simply laughed and was
still;
And that very night
Reuben sold out his right
To his brother and left the old mill.

To the city he went,
With his prospects content,
Saying mills never turn Fortune’s
wheel;
While George from the morn
Watched the kernels of corn
And the oats turn to saleable meal.

Reuben went into stocks,
And he felt Fortune’s shocks—
For all he invested he lost.
His capital low
To his vision did show
The sum his experience cost.

He fretted all day,
Became haggard and grey
And cynical, though in his prime;
He never dreamed that
George was jolly and fat,
While the mill ran along on full time.

The story is told,
Soon he squandered his gold—
He’s poor as a church-mouse to-day;
He walks through the street
With old shoes on his feet—
A picture of wreck and decay.

By peace and content—
Had he known what is meant—
To-day he full happy would feel;
He’d be merry and fat,
And he’d wear a white hat,
And his wealth would roll on with the wheel.

Though sad is his fate,
He’s but met the harsh fate
Of them upon every hand
Who leave what they know
And pig-headedly go
Into something they don’t understand.

ARTHUR and TED, two friends, would like to correspond with two young ladies. Arthur is nineteen, tall, fair, of a loving disposition, fond of home and music.

Ted is eighteen, tall, dark, good-looking, of a loving disposition, fond of home and children. Respondents must be about eighteen or nineteen, fond of home and music.

MAY, nineteen, medium height, fair, light hair, grey eyes, of a loving disposition, would like to correspond with a young gentleman.

BASIL and VICTOR, two friends, would like to correspond with two young ladies with a view to matrimony. Basil is twenty-seven, medium height, dark, dark hair and eyes, good-looking, loving, fond of music and dancing. Victor is twenty-four, medium height, fair, brown hair, blue eyes, good-looking, fond of music and dancing. Respondents must be between twenty-two and twenty-four, medium height, good-looking, fond of music and dancing.

ALMA, ELISIE and RUBY, three friends, would like to correspond with three young gentlemen with a view to matrimony. Alma is twenty-five, medium height, dark, brown eyes, fond of home and children. Elsie is twenty-two, tall, fair, golden hair, blue eyes. Ruby is twenty, tall, dark, good-looking, of a loving disposition, fond of home.

COMMUNICATIONS RECEIVED:

CONSTANCE is responded to by—George E., nineteen, fair, fond of home and children.

ANNIE by—Ernest, twenty-two, tall, dark.

MILLY by—Gerald, twenty-one, tall, fair, fond of home and music.

GERALD by—Ellie, nineteen, medium height, fair.

IVAN by—Lydia, seventeen, tall, fair, of a loving disposition.

FRED by—Ida, nineteen, brown hair, hazel eyes, of a loving disposition, fond of dancing.

HERBERT by—Florence S., seventeen, medium height, dark hair and eyes, good-looking, fond of singing.

KEITH by—Annie, eighteen, tall, dark, of a loving disposition, fond of home and music.

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